

“THE WORLD WE HAVE LOST”:
SOME RECOLLECTIONS AND REFLECTIONS

ROBERT ENNS



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Front Cover Photo: The Dietrich T Enns extended family, c. 1911. My father, Jacob W, is fourth from the right in the front row. My grandfather, Dietrich M, is on the right end of the top row. My great grandfather, Dietrich T, is the white bearded man fourth from the left top row.

Back Cover Photo: The Jacob W (Jack) Enns and Elsie Unruh Enns family, with Harold, big brother Bobby, and Eleanor, c. 1943. Ken joined the family in 1947.

Title Page Photo: Dedication of new Reedley Mennonite Brethren Church building, 1919.

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INTRODUCTION

Ruth and I have crossed paths with Amish people at several times and in various places over a period of many years. There are Amish communities in Indiana and Ohio where Terri and Dan have lived. When we visited friends in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, Phil Hofer introduced us to some of his Amish friends and we spent some time one afternoon visiting with an elderly Amish couple in their home. We are not alone in our fascination with the Amish. For several decades now, eight to ten million tourists visit the “Amish Country” in Pennsylvania each year, annually producing over \$2.1 billion in direct and indirect revenues for Lancaster County. This represents very effective marketing on the part of business people in Lancaster County, but it also indicates that many Americans are curious enough about a way of life that no longer exists for most of us that we are willing to spend substantial amounts of time and money just to get close to a world that we have lost.

The Amish, who are historical and spiritual kin of the Mennonites, are a *People of Preservation*, the title of a film that I used in my classes at Pacific. They value family, community, and a particular way of life strongly enough that they are willing to do whatever it takes to preserve that way of life. If automobiles and tractors threaten to speed things up in ways that will disrupt their family and community relationships, then they will refuse to use cars and tractors and rely on horses instead. If electricity, telephones and TV will weaken the boundaries around the family and community, then they will not use these modern conveniences in their homes. If following the latest fads and fashions in hair and clothing styles opens the door to prideful individualism, then they will all dress in simple clothing left over from previous eras and their hair and beards will all be cut in similar patterns. If speaking in an old dialect of Swiss-German will strengthen ties within their community, then they will continue to speak their own language, even though they have been in the United States for more than 250 years and can communicate perfectly well in English. One thing that makes the Amish different from how most of us live today is that they continue to follow a way of life that is similar to how most of our ancestors used to live, long after we stopped living that way. Nostalgia is part of it, but I think the Amish also remind us that just as things were different in the past, they could be different now, and they will surely be different in the future. There is nothing necessary or inevitable about how we choose to use technology and our natural resources, or how we organize our social relationships. The Amish make their choices and we make ours. They have chosen to value community and humility over individualism, comfort and convenience.

Of course the version of the old world that I have experienced is not nearly as exotic as the Amish way of life. Few of us have the will or the courage to be as intentional as the Amish in how we do and do not adapt to the technological and other changes in society around us. Most of us live lives that are pretty “normal,” so there is not much of a tourist industry in Reedley, California, where I was born, to check out the peculiar Mennonite way of life there. But the world in which I grew up in Reedley was closer to an old way of life than what most of us know today. We cannot revisit the past like we can be tourists in Amish country, but I want to provide some recollections and reflections on the kind of world in which I grew up. It is the big differences between the old world of my childhood and youth and how most of us are living now that inspired me to write these recollections and reflections. I want to leave my own personal account of what life was like in one version of an older world and how the society and culture around me have changed as they have during my lifetime—and I want to suggest some reasons why things have changed as they have.

Until a few years ago I could not even imagine that one day I might be inclined to write my memoirs. It seems presumptuous to think that anyone would want to read about my life. Some people, like Jimmy Carter, Nelson Mandela, Mother Theresa, and, in smaller ways even Mennonite Brethren patriarch J. B. Toews, actually changed history to some degree, so it is appropriate that they reflect on their lives, but I am not one of those. Few references to my work will appear in scholarly bibliographies and no alterations in any historical time-line will mark the impact that I have made on society. Neither have I experienced any dramatic personal or social catastrophe that might be worth writing about. I have experienced no personal tragedies like what happened to Pakisa Tshimika from Congo who became a paraplegic in a horrible automobile accident when he was a student-athlete at Pacific College, or Rhoda Janzen whose husband left her for the “Bob” he met on a gay website, or the sufferings of fellow Mennonites who dramatically escaped from Stalin’s Russia, as described by Wilfred Martens in his novel, *River of Glass*, and by many other Mennonites who have written about their suffering under the Soviet version of communism. Former Goshen College president Shirley Schowalter’s account of her childhood offers insight into what life was like in an “Old Mennonite” community among the “Pennsylvania Dutch,” and in *Peace Shall Destroy Many*, novelist Rudy Wiebe describes his boyhood years on a pioneer farm in a small Mennonite community in northern Saskatchewan, but growing up in Reedley, California was not nearly as dramatic as any of that. Others have literary skills that make the details of their everyday lives worth reading about. Our good friend, Jean Janzen, knows how to turn canned peaches into poetry, but I do not possess literary skills anything like that. I certainly cannot

write prose and prayers that are deep and profound like our friend LeRoy Friesen. Some memoirs are hilarious, but unfortunately, I do not have the comedic skills to make the stories of my life sound funny. What follows will elicit few belly-laughs. Some of my friends who were working on their memoirs encouraged me to write my own retrospective on my life, but I could not think of any good reason for doing so.

But then it occurred to me one day during the winter of 2012, while I was still recovering from a motorcycle accident, that it might be worthwhile to record an account of my life that emphasizes not only the unique things that have happened to me personally, but also reflects on how my life fits into larger patterns that I have in common with many others who share my location in history. Of course many of the specifics of my life experiences happened only to me. In fact, the details of my life do not replicate the life-course of any other human being who has ever lived. But in many ways my life has also been quite typical of what many members of my generation have experienced. So these memoirs are focused as much on what I have in common with others as they are on the particularities of my own personal story.

My interest in writing these memoirs was stimulated by the phrase, *The World We Have Lost*, which is the title of a book written by British social historian Peter Lasslett way back in 1965. I have tried to describe for myself and for the next generations who have experienced little or nothing of what my “Old World” was like something of what it meant to live in a social situation that is quite distant from what we now see and experience early in the twenty first century. In using myself as “data” for these reflections I risk trivializing my life, reducing it to nothing more than a case study in sociology. Taking this approach runs another risk, too, and that is the temptation to project my own experiences and perspectives out onto everyone else. It is easy to assume that everyone thinks and acts, or should think and act, pretty much like I do. We are all somewhat aware that our personal experiences do not happen in a vacuum but they are always shaped by all sorts of surrounding political, economic, and social conditions. It is easy for us Americans, especially, to focus on the individual side of the equation but I have tried to give equal time to the social and cultural dimensions of the experiences of my life.

Much of what follows will elaborate on this, but let me illustrate, in an introductory way, what I mean when I say that my life fits into patterns that I shared with many others in our time and place. My great-grandparents and one of my grandfathers were immigrants from Europe who initially settled in the American Midwest, and then migrated out to the western states. After serving a term of compulsory military service, I moved from a farm into urban areas and from agricultural work to white collar and

professional occupations. I married someone pretty much like myself, “the girl across the street,” in fact. Like many of our age-mates, we married young, had three children, and never separated or divorced. Our children have done “better” financially than we. The church was very important in our social life and in how we spent our time and money. We retired at age 65. There is a good chance that our life expectancy will be close to the average for the social categories into which we fit. In these and in many other ways what I have experienced is not unique at all.

I can suggest several analogies for the approach that I am taking. First, think of a school band, like the one I marched in during the Pet Parade in Reedley in 1946. While it is true that no two members of the band marched in exactly the same way, it is also true that the marchers shared at least as much in common with each other, staying in line and in step, as they did their various individual idiosyncrasies. Or think of children riding a carousel. No two kids will do it in exactly the same way, but the fact of the matter is that they all go round and round and up and down. And, more ominously, think about people arranging the furniture on the deck of the Titanic. It might be appropriate to admire their individual creativity and productivity, but it is also important to take note of their larger context out there in the dark Atlantic. We are hearing a lot these days about the nature and causes of climate change. What I have tried to do is to focus on how the *social* environment has changed during my lifetime, because contexts really do matter, and that applies as much to both our natural and social environments as to ocean waters filled with icebergs. My intent in writing these recollections and reflections has been to focus on what many of us shared in common as members of our particular time and place in history, so in some ways I am not even the main character in what follows. I am just one of many bit players in a huge, on-going drama.

I suppose that every generation thinks it is, in some sense “transitional,” bridging the divide between the past and the future, and probably many of the elderly in every generation think everything is falling apart, or that the ship is sinking, to refer to my Titanic analogy. But I also think that there are times when social change does happen at a faster rate than at other times--and it might actually be true that things really are falling apart. I share with many others the sense that society has gone through an especially dramatic shift during the last couple of generations, and I also share with many others some deep concerns about whether our society has any “center” at all, and, if it does, whether that can hold in the decades that are yet to come. So in what follows I have tried to describe some of the ways in which the society that I experienced as a child and younger person no longer exists. I have tried to

describe what "The World We Have Lost" was like and how and why it has changed, for better and for worse.

I have several specific audiences in mind in writing these memoirs. First, I want to leave an account for our three daughters, Terri, Connie, and Karen, to share with them something of how Ruth and I came to be who we are; to remind them of some of the experiences of their growing-up years; and to provide them with some of the reasons that we had in mind in making the decisions that we did. Some of these decisions, into which they had little or no input, had huge impacts on their lives, both positively and negatively. Second, perhaps one day some of our grandchildren, great-grandchildren, or other descendants might wonder about their ancestral heritage. Perhaps one day some of our descendants might be curious. Maybe a few of our other relatives and friends might also be interested. But mostly I am writing these recollections for myself. Telling my story for myself, for my children and grandchildren, and with these other possible audiences also in mind, has helped me to understand in a new way something of what my life has been about. I have *not* written these memoirs with my fellow sociologists, nor my professional academic colleagues, nor graduate students in mind as primary audiences. This manuscript has not been adequately researched, nor is it in proper academic form, for that. Writing this has been more like entertainment or recreation for myself than like real academic work.

I will briefly outline what follows. After these introductory explanations and equivocations, in Part One I will review some personal and family histories. I will survey some of the basic events that I have experienced in my life, and, then, I will briefly review the family histories that form the background for my personal story. In Part Two I will provide a series of observations and anecdotes that will illustrate some of the ways in which the social institutions in which I have participated were interrelated to form a mostly integrated whole, like the organs in a body. I will then provide some examples of how our communities were held together by a shared culture. Of course both society and culture have changed a lot during my lifetime, so I will also summarize how and why some of these changes happened.

But not only did the social and cultural environment around me change. I changed, too. I left my old home. In Part Three I will review what leaving home has meant for me. Experiences that I had while I was in the U.S. Army, when I was still very young, were very important in what followed during the rest of my life, so I will recount some of what happened during my army days. Religion has been very important through all of the days of my life, so I will next provide my version of a "map" of the

theological terrain through which I and many others in my generation have journeyed. I have inserted a brief summary of the reflections of one theologian on Jesus. Ruth and I have repeatedly left our home country for Japan, so I will give an account of how some of our experiences in Japan have impacted our lives.

But we did not stay “away.” We did not return to our old world homes in Reedley for any length of time, but we did come pretty close. We returned to the Central Valley in California and to the growing city of Fresno. In Part Four I will review several of the institutions that have been important in my life during our many years in Fresno: Fresno Pacific College, the College Community Church, the Kerckhoff neighborhood, the OASIS program founded by Ruth, and the condominium “community” in which we have lived for more than twenty eight years. In Part Five I will review some of our other experiences of being away: Our year of teaching at Hesston College in Kansas and another temporary period of residence in Phoenix, Arizona. In each of these settings, we watched people and institutions struggle to maintain a balance between what seemed to be good about the old world and what was emerging in the new world around us. The story of what happened to Mennonites who remained in Europe after our own ancestors left is both fascinating and tragic, so I will insert in a brief digression an account of that mostly sad history. Many of us have been perplexed by the close association between white American evangelicals and President Donald Trump, so I have inserted a final digression in which I offer some reflections on that matter.

Along with the church, no institution has been more important in my life than the nuclear family that Ruth and I constructed—with help from our children, and then our grandchildren, all of their spouses and partners, three great-grandchildren, and many others in our larger social circles, so my family merits a major section of its own (Part Six). Finally, I will offer some concluding comments (and some final sermonizing) in which I reflect on what I think all of this means.

Perhaps these memoirs might seem a lot like a lecture in Introduction to Sociology—or maybe the whole course! In fact, a detailed outline looks somewhat like a glossary of sociological jargon, or at least it does not look much like a “typical” memoir (though there is no such thing), but I cannot help that. I have spent too many years of my life studying relationships between the individual and the social context to stop now. I cannot help but reflect on my life through sociological spectacles, but I think it is also important to recognize that how I think sociologically cannot be separated from my own personal experiences, either. At some point sociological thinking became an important part of who I am.

I will quote just a few authors in what follows but I do want to begin with one sentence from fellow sociologist Robert Bellah, who has exercised a very strong influence on how I think. His comment also indicates that he and many others in that era shared some of the same concerns that are reflected in these memoirs: “In my life there has been a long preoccupation with fragmentation and wholeness and it is this which has made religion such an abiding concern.” (*Beyond Belief*, 1969, p. xix) I think you will see a lot of that same preoccupation in what follows.

I will list some of the things that I have *not* done in what follows. These are my *recollections*. They are not really “history” since I have consulted some of the files to which I have convenient access but I have not really done the thorough archival research and interview work that would be necessary to assure greater historical accuracy, so some of the specific dates, places, and names that follow undoubtedly contain some errors of fact. I am sure that the archives contain information that I have forgotten or did not even know, so these data have also been omitted, since they are not part of my “recollections.” But, on the other hand, I have not taken the liberty to deliberately distort, exaggerate, or generate something new in order to create a literary effect. I have not intentionally made things up just to make a point. Ruth, Terri, Connie, Karen and a few others have read all or parts of earlier versions of what I have written and they have offered many helpful suggestions and corrections, but, of course, all of the errors, distortions, exaggerations and omissions that remain are the result of what has gone on inside my own mind. But they have not been intentionally “fictionalized,” as seems to be one legitimate approach to writing memoirs that is in vogue these days. Where I have misremembered, it is probably in ways that make me look good—at least to myself. Who wants to have bad memories about one’s own self? Another thing that I have not done is try to prescribe cures for the social ailments that I see around us. Like many social scientists, I have tried to be more *descriptive* than *prescriptive*. One of the books that I have enjoyed over a period of many years that does try to suggest remedies for our social ills is Robert Bellah and others, *The Good Society*, written some 30 years ago. I am sure that many of my prejudices and preferences show through in what follows, but laying out a plan for what I think a “good society” might look like has not been a big part of my agenda, though I do indulge in a bit of overt sermonizing at the very end.

When I began this process, I vaguely imagined that I might write 100 pages or so, selecting a few sociological concepts and a few anecdotes from my life to illustrate what they mean, but once I began, I found it difficult to limit myself to just a few sociological notions, since they are interrelated. I also found myself entertained by my own recollections and reflections. Before I knew it, these memoirs

were inflated to more than five times what I initially anticipated. Included in some sections that follow are some details that no one except me will consider to be worth the telling, but there are also sections in which important details have been omitted, and there are whole topics that I have not addressed at all. The unanticipated length of this manuscript has not been a problem for me since I am retired and have plenty of free time, and it should not be a problem for anyone else, either, since none of this is required reading.

When I realized how long these memoirs were becoming, on several occasions I sat down in front of my computer, determined to substantially reduce the length of the manuscript. But each time I tried to delete large sections, I failed. The manuscript would benefit greatly from the work of a professional editor but since it is highly likely that anyone who reads any parts of these recollections and reflections will be a college-educated adult, most readers will have learned to read with discrimination, focusing on what seems to be interesting or important, skimming other parts, and skipping entirely sections that are of no interest at all. Since we each have our own personal preferences and inclinations, I decided to leave it all in and let the reader be the editor, choosing what to include and what to omit, depending on personal interests and priorities.

Also, since I have not constructed these memoirs like a novel or a movie in which the plot will make no sense if some of the early scenes are omitted, nor like a textbook in which earlier chapters are prerequisite to understanding what comes later, I think of the various sections as being more like a collection of essays that are arranged topically and somewhat chronologically, or like a series of short stories, so not too much will be lost if the reader chooses to read in a different order than how I have sequenced my topics, to skip around a bit, or even to leave out entire sections. For those who are not really interested in reading all of the nearly 250,000 words in this manuscript, I have included a collection of photographs that visually illustrate many of the major events in my life. The photos are arranged in (mostly) chronological order rather than by social institution, as in the document that follows. If it is true, as a Chinese proverb has it, that one picture is worth 1,000 words, then the photographs represent a 57,000 word summary of some important parts of my life. I will comment in the text that follows on why I have selected these few from the embarrassingly large collection of slides, prints, and digital photos that we still have stored in our computer and here and there in our house and garage. In this manuscript I hope to set some of the contexts for the photos. But the 57,000 word photographic version might be a good place to start.

Since my goals include to inform and to entertain as well as to make a sociological point, much of what follows does not fit neatly into the overarching thesis. I have included many things just because they were fun for me to remember, or because they seemed (to me) to be too interesting or too important to omit. So these are my recollections, with some mostly sociological reflections about them. I say “mostly” sociological because a sermonic quality undoubtedly creeps in now and then. I cannot help that, either. I did graduate from seminary, was a missionary, and on a couple of occasions even served as a “pastor,” though that was always part-time and interim, so it could be that much of what follows sounds a lot like a very long sermon. If this does sound like preaching, please know that my sermon is addressed first to myself. If my writing style has all of the elegance and charm of a sociology textbook, that is probably because that is the kind of literature I have spent too much time reading—textbooks and student papers. But, again, no one is required to read all of this and it will appear on no final examinations.

I did not really anticipate when I started this little adventure in memoir writing that it might require me to confront in very personal and intense ways some big and hard questions: How have the Mennonite and American societies around me changed during my lifetime? Why did these changes happen? How have these changes shaped me and others in my generation? How have I chosen to respond to these changes? How do I understand the impact that Japan has had in my life? Why did I choose to respond to all of this as I did? And how have these responses impacted others around me, beginning with my family and extending out from there to my students, fellow church members, friends, neighbors and others? Thinking about questions like these has not quite risen to the level of a social and spiritual identity crisis, but it has certainly involved some pretty serious thought and soul-searching. I think that is not such a bad thing to do once again, even at this late stage in life. This big project has partly been a labor of love, but it has also been a lot of self-indulgent fun for me. I can only hope that reading what I have written will be fun for at least a few other people, too.

One last introductory note: I began this project during the winter of 2012 and have added information and made modifications from time to time over the period of years since. But during the spring of 2016 I was invited by some Japanese pastors to write a history of the Mennonite Brethren mission in Japan. That major research project required that I put the writing of these memoirs on hold. So during the months between the spring of 2016 and the publication of the Japanese translation of my report in the spring of 2020, I made few additions or changes to this manuscript. Of course many things changed during that period of time. Who could have predicted in May 2016 that Donald Trump would be the

U.S. president, or that 81% of white evangelicals would be one of his most solid bases of support? Too many members of our circle of family and good friends have passed away. Our church has changed. Who could have predicted that a young pregnant woman would become our pastor? Ruth and I changed. Three of Ruth's siblings have passed away and we now have three great-grandsons. We enjoyed a very informative 16 day cruise up the Rhine River. Our health remains mostly good, but we did have to deal with a series of relatively minor health issues. I learned many things in the course of my research on mission work in Japan. Some of what I learned I would rather not know. It will be some time before the long-term social and cultural impacts of the New Coronavirus-19 pandemic that continues to threaten our collective health and well-being will be apparent. There have been so many changes that I have been tempted to start all over again on these memoirs. But I resisted that temptation. With the exception of a few notes, occasional updating of information, some editorial changes here and there, the insertion of a digression on the Trump presidency and the addition of a small collection of photos, I have left this manuscript mostly in the form in which it was in the spring of 2016. As we approached the end of this long project, Ruth helped with editing and made most of the arrangements for printing the manuscript. Without her help, I might still be selecting fonts and adjusting spacing and margins. Thank you, Ruth. So these memoirs are what they are. I trust that this is good enough to provide some recollections and reflections on my (our) life and "the world we have lost."

PART ONE: SOME HISTORY

MY PERSONAL STORY: JUST THE FACTS.

I cannot begin the story of my life with “It was a dark and stormy night.” because my birth certificate indicates that I was born at 8:10 a.m. on May 7, 1935 in Reedley, California. I was born in Reedley because of decisions that my forebears made many decades before my birth. My great-grandparents on both sides of my family were born in Mennonite "colonies" in southern Russia, now Ukraine. My great-grandparents migrated from Russia, with their families and many other fellow Mennonites, in the 1870s and 80s, first to the American mid-west and then, with my grandparents and other relatives, they moved west to California just after the beginning of the 20th century. My parents, Jack Enns and Elsie Unruh, were both born in Reedley, living and working first on their parents' farms, but by the time of my birth my parents lived in town and my father had left actual farm work and was primarily a businessman. I attended the Washington Grammar School across the street from our house on the northwest corner of 13th and K Streets until I was in the fourth grade, when we moved to a farm on Dinuba Avenue about 200 yards east of Buttonwillow Avenue, which was at that time about one mile east of Reedley. I continued to attend Washington through the sixth grade, spent two years at General Grant Junior High School, and then, after attending for four years, graduated from the Immanuel Academy in 1953.

Since my father owned (together with his brother, John) both an automobile business (Enns Pontiac) and some farms, I did farm work (for pay) from the time I was in about the sixth grade through high school and then I worked part-time at Enns Pontiac while I attended Reedley College. I attended the Reedley Mennonite Brethren (MB) Church, which was just across the street from our house on K Street, until my junior year in high school when I began to drive bus and help with other activities in the Selma Chapel, an outreach program of the Reedley MB Church in the nearby town of Selma. I, along with a number of my age mates, was baptized in the Kings River, thereby becoming a member of the Reedley Mennonite Brethren Church when I was 14 years old. During my school years in Reedley from junior high school on I was active in a whole range of extracurricular activities, including athletics, music, student government, and even a play.

I had one girlfriend, Mary Lou, through most of my four years at Immanuel, but, after terminating that relationship, Ruth Neufeld and I began to date during our freshman year at Reedley College. Since Ruth and her family lived across the street from our home out on the farm, we knew each other from the time we were in the fourth grade, though we had few social contacts until later. Her family belonged to a different branch of the Mennonite tradition, she was much taller than I was at the time, and, after all, she was a girl! We first became good friends during the two and one half years that Ruth attended Immanuel, especially when we travelled around the state together as members of Immanuel musical groups. The Neufeld family belonged to the First Mennonite Church (then part of the General Conference (GC) Mennonite denomination) in Reedley but Ruth and I were both active in the Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship (IVCF) group at Reedley College (called Christian Living on Campus, or CLOC Club) and we worked together for a time in the Selma Chapel. We became engaged during the spring of our sophomore year at Reedley College.

After graduating from Reedley College, I volunteered to have my name moved forward in the draft into the U.S. military. This gave me some control over when I would be drafted, since it seemed to be inevitable at the time that my conscription number would be called sooner or later. Ruth was accepted as a student at the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB), where she transferred from Reedley College as a junior with a major in elementary education. I entered the military in July 1955, and was sent to Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, Texas, for basic training, first as part of a special basic training unit for non-combatant "conscientious objectors" and then as a medical corpsman. In January 1956 I arrived in Korea where I was first assigned to an infantry platoon as a medical aid-man. Later I was transferred to the regimental "Collecting Station" where I worked as an attendant in a small medical clinic, mostly dispensing medicines, giving some injections, and doing paperwork, and then, finally, I was assigned to work as a clerk in the medical company headquarters. During my sixteen months in Korea I learned very little about the country. Post-war conditions were still very poor and mostly "off-limits" to us GI's, who were pretty much confined to our bases. I was able to make numerous trips to Japan, sometimes with my cousin, Earl Enns, and other friends who were assigned to the same Army medical company in Korea. We traveled to various places in Japan, including trips to the Osaka area to visit the MB missionaries who were serving there.

I was discharged from the Army on May 2, 1957 and Ruth and I were married shortly after that, on June 20, 1957 in the First Mennonite Church in Reedley. After a brief honeymoon trip to the coast, we lived in a small house in an orchard (Residence #1) near the farmhouse where my father had grown up.

I worked in Reedley until we made a long trip to the IVCF camp in Ontario, Canada. While at the camp, we learned that we were expecting our first child, so we hurried back to Reedley to work, sell our new Pontiac Chieftain, and move into a duplex on Anapamu (Residence #2) in Santa Barbara for the fall semester at UCSB where I joined Ruth as an undergraduate student. I chose a major in sociology without knowing very much about it, but I wanted to study something that would help me “understand people” and I had the impression that psychologists spend too much time doing experiments with pigeons and rats. Having decided on sociology as my major, I next needed to consider what kind of profession that might lead to. I thought about some kind of social work, so I did a practicum in a camp for delinquent boys up in the mountains above Santa Barbara, but I did not pursue that any further. Teaching was another option, so one summer I enrolled in a secondary education course at UCSB, but I was so turned off by the professor and the vacuous content of the course, that I decided I did not want to pursue that any further, either. During our two years in Santa Barbara, Ruth did some further work toward a credential in speech and hearing therapy and I completed a BA in sociology. Terri was born in Santa Barbara on April 3, 1958. We were active in the Grace Community Church in Santa Barbara and with the IVCF group at UCSB and we both worked part-time to cover our school and living expenses. Ruth did some part-time teaching and I did janitorial and landscape work for the Goleta Valley School District. We moved into a house that was built around an old tank house (Residence #3) to be nearer to the university campus and to our work, Ruth in the nearby County Hospital where she tutored students and I on the campus of the Cathedral Oaks school just across a field from where I cleaned rooms and helped with landscape maintenance.

After I graduated from UCSB in June 1959, we moved to Pasadena where I became a student in Fuller Theological Seminary (FTS). We both did part-time janitorial work and various other jobs (I even owned a small lawn mowing business for a while.) until my graduation in June 1962. During our three years in Pasadena, we attended the Lake Avenue Congregational Church for a while. I also served for a brief time as a volunteer staff member for IVCF at California State College, Los Angeles, and then we attended a Hispanic Methodist Church in Pasadena where I was employed as part-time minister of youth. We conducted English-language worship services and other activities for the young people in the congregation while the older folks did their services in Spanish. Connie was born in Pasadena on December 6, 1959 and Karen was born in Hollywood on August 24, 1961. **(Photo #14)** We lived in two residences during our three years in Pasadena, on Penn Street and Hill Ave. (Residences #4 and #5). Shortly before graduating from FTS, we made arrangements to go to Japan as missionaries under

the Mennonite Brethren Board of Foreign Missions. On July 8, 1962 I was ordained as an MB minister in the Reedley MB Church. Dr. Clarence Roddy, homiletics (preaching) professor at Fuller, delivered the sermon and my ordination papers were signed by MB patriarch J. B. Toews and Reedley MB pastor Dan Friesen, then chair of the MB General Conference.

The MB Board of Foreign Missions asked me to attend a summer session in the Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary (MBBS, now Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary, FPBS) before going to Japan as missionaries, so we moved back to a small house on the corner of 12th and K Streets in Reedley (Residence #6) for the summer of 1962. In August we boarded the freighter *Wild Ranger* for our first trip across the Pacific to Japan as a family. My missionary assignment was to do "student evangelism." For one year we shared a house in Kobe with the Abe Koop family from Canada while doing Japanese language studies and visiting Japanese MB and other churches (Residence #7). During the early summer of 1963 we moved to Toyonaka (Residence #8) to be nearer to the Ishibashi MB Church where we helped with English Bible and other classes and the Ishibashi campus of Osaka University where I taught English classes part time and assisted with the activities of KGK (the Japanese version of IVCF). After one year, we moved back to Okamoto, a suburb of Kobe, so our kids could commute to the Canadian Academy for their schooling. For about one and one half years we lived in a historic old Japanese house that had been designed, built and resided in by Tanizaki Jun'ichiro, a famous Japanese writer (Residence #9). During this initial three and one half year term as missionaries, we also taught English Bible classes in several Japanese MB churches.

For various reasons that I will explain later, we felt uncomfortable with our roles as missionaries, but we did enjoy many things about our life and work in Japan, so we explored the possibility of returning to Japan as teachers. With that in mind, during the winter of 1966 we returned to California where we lived for a time in my childhood home on the corner of 13th and K Streets in Reedley (Residence #10) while I took summer courses at CSUF and investigated various options for graduate school. I enrolled in the MA program in sociology at UCSB, where we spent the next year and one half. We lived in a duplex (6666 Pasado) in Isla Vista (Residence #11) where our three daughters attended school. Ruth taught elementary school for the Goleta Valley School District. We were active in the Goleta Valley Baptist Church during this second period of residence in the Santa Barbara area. Before finishing my MA degree in December, 1967, we completed negotiations for teaching positions with Osaka Shoin Women's College and we arranged with the MB Board of Missions and Services (BOMAS) a new status as self-supporting "associates" of the Mission. We also completed negotiations with our

daughters, who agreed to move to Japan again *IF* they did not have to attend Japanese schools. The Mission asked me to attend classes in the Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary before our return to Japan, so once again we moved back to Reedley where we lived in a house on Linden Ave. (Residence #12)

We flew to Japan in February 1968. After a brief search, we settled into a small house with a total of 620 square feet on two floors overlooking a bamboo grove in Okamoto, within walking distance of where we had lived previously (Residence #13). It was an easy train and bus commute to the Canadian Academy for the girls but Ruth and I had to travel about one hour and 15 minutes each way to Higashi (East) Osaka where Osaka Shoin Women's College is located. We each taught English three days each week, Ruth in the high school and I in the college. Ruth's salary basically covered the cost of tuition for two students at Canadian Academy. We intended to live on my salary, but since we could not quite balance our budget with just our incomes from Shoin, I also taught part-time at Osaka University and in various other places, including, for a time, IBM and the head offices of the Mainichi Newspaper in Osaka. I also taught English Bible classes in several Japanese MB churches and frequently attended MB churches on Sundays while Ruth and the kids often attended the Kobe Union Church. As our children grew in their desires for space and privacy (We hosted many visitors from here and there, including both sets of our parents.) and as we began to feel the financial pressures more keenly, we considered the options of returning to the U.S. or finding additional living space and more income in Japan. When a teaching position at Pacific College in Fresno became an option, we decided to return to our "home" in California.

I began teaching sociology, anthropology and Japanese studies courses at Pacific College in the fall of 1970, part-time at first because I also entered a Ph.D. program at UCSB, initially in the Religious Studies Department, later changed to the Department of Sociology. Graduate study was financially possible, in part, because I had recently become eligible for the educational benefits of the G.I Bill because of my earlier military service. With financial help from my parents, we purchased a house in Fresno, at 3991 N. Millbrook Avenue (Residence #14). Ruth took a teaching position with the Clovis Unified School District, and I was busy teaching new courses, commuting to Santa Barbara for graduate seminars, and studying. We quickly established the College Community Church in Clovis (CCCMB) as our church home. Terri became a student in Sierra Junior High School and Connie and Karen were students in the Centennial Elementary School, both near our home on Millbrook Avenue.

A new chapter in our family story began in the fall of 1972 when we purchased a large but seriously abused old house at 3636 E. Kerckhoff Avenue near downtown Fresno (Residence #15). We purchased the house because we had always wanted to live in a big old house and this was one that we could afford, but also because our friends, Gary and Arlene Nachtigall, had purchased a home just four houses away and we were interested in living in some form of more intentional "community." During the next few years many friends with connections with the college, seminary and congregation also purchased homes in the area and with this we began a twenty-year experience of living in proximity as an "intentional neighborhood." Ruth took the leadership in repairing and refurbishing our old house and I worked at bringing order into what had been out-of-control landscaping. We built a "community" swimming pool and installed a volleyball net in our large backyard, which was also the location for many of our weekly neighborhood potlucks. Terri commuted to McLane High School, near her former Junior High School, Karen became a student in the Jackson Elementary School in our new neighborhood, and Connie entered the Tehipite Middle School where she was joined later by Karen. Connie and Karen then commuted by bus (and later car) to Immanuel High School in Reedley. We lived in our Kerckhoff house and neighborhood from 1972 to 1992, when we tired of maintaining our large (but by then mostly empty) house and yard so we moved to a condominium during the winter of 1993 (Residence #16) after a wonderful 20 year Kerckhoff reunion celebration.

After passing exams and receiving approval for a dissertation project that included research in Japan, I was given a one year sabbatical leave-of-absence from Fresno Pacific College and, in the fall of 1975, Ruth, Connie, Karen and I (Terri, who was a senior in high school, stayed in our Kerckhoff house with friends.) moved into an apartment on the campus of the Palmore Institute in downtown Kobe (Residence #17). Ruth taught full time and I part-time in Palmore's night school program of English language instruction for working adults, Connie and Karen attended classes in the Canadian Academy, and I spent most of my time and energy working on research on religion and family change in Japan. This included reading in various university libraries and interviewing elderly members of Japanese Protestant families. I also reconnected with several of the Japanese MB churches where we had served previously and we frequently attended the Kobe Union Church. Connie returned to California during Thanksgiving break to live with Grandma Neufeld and to be with her friends in Reedley. The rest of us returned to Fresno to begin classes in the fall of 1976. I finally completed my dissertation and Ph.D. program in sociology at UCSB in December 1979.

During almost all of our years in Fresno we were active in the College Community Church, Mennonite Brethren (CCCMB, recently renamed Willow Avenue Mennonite Church, WAMC), attending regularly, singing in the choir, teaching classes, and serving on a variety of commissions and committees. I was elected as "moderator" on two separate occasions and even served as one-quarter time interim pastor during Bill Braun's six-month leave of absence in 2007.

I was busy at Fresno Pacific, also, serving as chair of the social science division for several years. I was appointed Dean of the College in 1981, working in this position for two years as interim dean and for two more years with a full appointment as dean. During 1985-86, after resigning from my position as dean, I was given another sabbatical leave-of-absence. Ruth and I spent the first half of this sabbatical year in Elkhart, Indiana, where we lived in the basement of the home of Willard and Alice Roth (Residence #18), sat in on some classes and worked in the library of the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) in preparation for another project in Japan, this time to do a "church member profile" of the five Mennonite-related groups in Japan. After a stop-over in Fresno for the birth of Chris, our first grandchild, we spent the second part of this sabbatical year living, again, on the campus of Palmore Institute in Kobe (Residence #19) where we taught part-time and enjoyed traveling to the various places in Japan where Mennonite groups are located. Our next longer-term experience in Japan came in 1991 when I was given another six month sabbatical leave from FPC. I substituted for Dr. Gilbert Bascom, a missionary friend who was on the faculty at Kwansei Gakuin University located between Kobe and Osaka and I used my "free time" to work on several articles and a translation project which were later published in various journals related to Japanese studies. Ruth was busy administrating the Older Adult Social Services (OASIS) program that she had established at FPC, but she joined me in the Bascom home in Japan (Residence #20) for two months during the summer.

I returned to Fresno to a somewhat different teaching assignment, assuming primary responsibility for a course entitled "Values in School and Society" which was required for all students in graduate programs at FPC. During the ten years that I taught this course, I also provided leadership for an exchange program with Osaka Shoin Women's College. Beginning in 1991, students from Shoin spent part of the month of March on the FPC campus, living in dormitories, relating to FPC students, studying English, and doing field trips in the Fresno area and beyond. When we were invited to make the program a more truly reciprocal "exchange" by sending Fresno students to Osaka, we initiated a month-long study program hosted by Osaka Shoin in 1994. Additional groups of students (plus faculty and other friends) traveled to Osaka in 1995, 1997, 1999, and 2001 for programs that included home stays,

local field trips and seven days of rail-pass travel to various places in Japan. In retrospect, I am quite sure that these five study programs in Japan represent my finest contribution to the education of the students at Fresno Pacific.

Ruth has experienced a variety of work responsibilities, including wife, mother, teacher, missionary, house restorer (and mover), and founder and administrator of OASIS, which, at that time, was an innovative program of social day-care services for the elderly, plus some other shorter-term administrative assignments. I retired from Fresno Pacific University (FPU, as it had come to be known) in 2000. After a year of investigating various options and completing other responsibilities, Ruth and I returned to Japan once again in April 2002, this time as volunteers, teaching English in two Japanese MB churches in the southern part of Osaka. We lived in a comfortable, almost new house next to rice paddies in Iwade-cho (Residence #21) in the countryside near Wakayama City and we enjoyed learning to know many wonderful Japanese people in the churches and in our small English classes. After one year, we were invited to serve as interim "pastors" in a small, struggling MB "church plant" in Komaki, a suburb of Nagoya, where, again, our living situation (Residence #22) was very comfortable and convenient, in a "New Town," near a modern shopping mall. We very much enjoyed our nineteen months with the people in the Komaki Hope Chapel and with others whom we learned to know in our classes and in a variety of other contexts. It was also a pleasure for us to host the numerous family and friends who visited us in Japan and, later, the many (about 26) Japanese friends who visited us in Fresno after our return in April 2005.

Our next "cross-cultural experience" happened during the 2010-2011 academic year when I taught (about three quarter time) at Hesston College (HC), in Hesston, Kansas. HC is a small two-year college with about 450 students operated by the Mennonite Church U.S.A. (MCUSA) in the small (population about 4,500) Midwestern town of Hesston. We lived in the refurbished basement of an old house on Main Street, just across the street from the HC campus (Residence #23). We greatly enjoyed our time in this small-town social environment in a different part of the country. We learned to know many new Mennonite friends of various sorts and we visited numerous churches and other sites during our ten months in Kansas. Teaching a new generation of college students in a new social and cultural setting proved to be a challenge for me since I had not worked in a classroom since retiring from FPU ten years earlier, but this, too, was a positive experience—for me, at least. I am not so sure about the students.

We thought that might be the last of our many cross-cultural adventures, but in November 2013 Ruth was invited to serve as Interim Director of Goldensun, a Mennonite-related organization that provides residences and other support for adults with developmental disabilities. For about nine months we lived in a large, fairly new residence (#24) that was intended to serve as a home for clients of Goldensun.

We have experienced many changes in family relationships. All of our parents and aunts and uncles, three of Ruth's siblings, and a few cousins are deceased. All three of our daughters and three of our four grandchildren are married and they and each of their spouses have at least BA degrees, some also have MA and two have Ph.D. degrees. Connie and Kevin Enns-Rempel live in Fresno, but the other members of our immediate family are somewhat scattered. Chris and Britni Rempel and their twin boys, Owen and Grant (recently joined by Carter), our first great-grandchildren, live in Reedley. Both Chris and Britni are school teachers. Jenn (Rempel), recently married to Phil Wilke, lives in Columbus, Ohio, where Terri Enns and Dan Brilhart also live. Karen Enns and Mark Flaming lived in Hood River, Oregon for several years until their 2014 move to Madagascar, to Fiji in 2016, and then to Yangon, Myanmar in 2017. They returned to Hood River during the summer of 2019 and they recently moved across the Columbia River to White Salmon, Washington. In June 2012 Zak Flaming graduated from the University of Oregon in Eugene and he entered medical school in the fall of 2014, graduating in the spring of 2018. Zak and Jane Christen were married in July 2020 in Brooklyn, New York where Zak was doing a residency in emergency medicine. Ali Flaming graduated from Occidental College in the Los Angeles area in May 2015. For several years she and boyfriend Jordan Lerner worked in South Africa. Because of a lot of moving around, gathering as a family has been difficult to schedule but we have managed to get together at least once every few years or so, mostly somewhere in California, Oregon, or Ohio. **(Photo #55)** My three siblings and all four of Ruth's siblings lived in the Reedley area, after Freda's move from Watsonville, as do about half of their children, with the others scattered here and there across the country. Ruth's oldest sister, Mary Alice Butts, passed away in 2015, her brother, Richard, died in 2018, Freda passed away in 2019, and Judy's husband, Vern Warkentin, died in 2021.

We have been blessed with many opportunities for travel. In addition to visiting various parts of the U.S. and Canada and our many (about a dozen) trips to Japan where we have lived for a total of about a dozen years, we have traveled to Korea, Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, The People's Republic of China, and, in 2010, Viet Nam. We have visited Canada, Mexico, Haiti, and Costa Rica. We spent two weeks traveling in England and Scotland, and a very special experience was joining the Mennonite Heritage

Cruise in Ukraine with my father shortly before his death in 1997. In 2016 we enjoyed a sixteen day cruise up the Rhine River. Much of our international traveling has been done with family or friends.

A slight digression from the normal routines of my life was the fun of riding motorcycles (**Photo #43**). I owned a Triumph while a student at Reedley College. During our first years in Japan, I rode a small (55 c.c.) Honda “Cub” scooter that Ruth and I used for local transportation, but we later exchanged that for a small Honda car (360 c.c. precursor to the Civic). I stopped riding on two wheels in Japan because of too many close-call experiences with large busses and trucks that operated according to an informal understanding in Japan that the larger vehicle always has the right-of-way, placing motor scooters near the bottom of the pecking order. I began riding a motorcycle again in the late 1980s, after our children were adults and no longer as dependent on me as they once were. Most of my local rides were in the company of pastor Bill Braun and other riders from our congregation. When Ruth and I went on longer rides, it was almost always with Bill and Joyce Braun, John and Betty Bergey, Bob and Barbara Buxman, or other friends with Mennonite connections. My riding career came to a very abrupt end in August 2011 when a motorcycle accident left me with broken bones in my foot and ankle, a concussion, partially collapsed lung, and numerous bruises and abrasions (**Photo #44**). With that I became an ex-biker (“biker-emeritus,” I joked).

I have not received many formal honors during my life but I do have a plaque declaring that I received the FPU President’s Distinguished Service Award in 1999 “in recognition of faithful and wise service to students and colleagues.” And during the fall of 2012 a committee decided that my life represented the ideals to which the Immanuel Schools aspire and that I merited induction into the “Immanuel Hall of Fame,” so my classmate, cardiologist and fellow CCCMB member Marge Gerbrandt Wiens and I became members of the Immanuel Hall of Fame. The honor included a dinner and a plaque in the Hall of Fame sidewalk on the Immanuel campus.

Ruth and I, and our children and grandchildren, have all been blessed with remarkably good health. None of our descendants has passed away, or even been seriously ill. Except for a tonsillectomy when I was eight years old, torn ligaments in my ankle during my seminary days, an appendectomy in Japan in 1963, radiation treatments for prostate cancer in 2006, hand surgery in 2008 and a long period of recuperation after my motorcycle accident in 2011, caring for my medical needs has not (yet) occupied much of our time or energy. My biggest health-related complaint during the last 20 years has been hearing loss.

I will not have much to say in these memoirs about my own “personality.” I have never really tried to develop a vocabulary for understanding personality, my own or anyone else’s, so the fact that I have not spent a lot of time in introspection (and no time at all in formal counseling) will probably be apparent in how these recollections and reflections are formulated. I know enough to be aware that things are rarely as simple as what they seem to mean on the “surface,” and that therapists have various terms for what is always going on below the level of conscious awareness (e.g. id, Oedipus complex, subconscious, archetypes). It is a bit intimidating to realize that some of my family and friends who know a lot more about psychological processes than I do will read in what I have written meanings that I have not intended, but I have tried to write about things about which I have some level of conscious awareness.

Perhaps it will be worthwhile to very briefly recount what some others have said about my “personality.” I recall hearing from my friends during my growing up years that I was “arrogant,” or “stuck up.” The caption under my Immanuel senior class photo (I was class president.) says: “I am Bob Enns. Who are you?” But I certainly never thought of myself that way. I would sometimes hear that some people thought I was too cynical, but, again, I did not think of myself in those terms, and, on occasion, some of my friends would say that people who thought I was cynical just misunderstood my sense of humor—and my outlook on life more generally. Probably what I heard most frequently during my adult years was that people thought of me as a “pessimist.” In fact, one of the speakers at my retirement celebration commented that “Bob Enns is the kind of person who can find the dark cloud behind every silver lining.” But I always thought that if the dark cloud is really there, it should be OK to acknowledge the fact. And in a variation on “Just because you are paranoid doesn’t mean they are not really after you,” I would also like to observe that “Just because you are a pessimist does not mean that there are not really big problems out there.” I will leave it to others to judge whether these memoirs reflect the personality of a “pessimist,” the observations of a “realist,” or something else.

I will also confess in this context that I have had a life-long propensity (compulsion?) to change vehicles. Perhaps this is an indication of a quirk in my personality, or a defect in my character, but I can recall owning a total of 42 vehicles during my lifetime, including seven motorcycles and two pickups. All except one (the 1957 Pontiac Chieftain (**Photo #11**) that was partially a wedding gift from my parents) were “pre-owned” and almost all were purchased directly from the previous owners rather than from dealers. The first was a 1948 (?) Triumph 30-50 motorcycle when I was a student at Reedley College and the most recent, which I have promised Ruth will be my last, is a 2013 Chevrolet Volt “plug-in

hybrid.” Each change represented a quest for the best available combination of economy, comfort, convenience, and “cool.” We have owned three diesel and three hybrid vehicles. Only four fit the “gas guzzler” category. Along the way we have owned some very exotic vehicles, the most eccentric being two German DKWs. Before they became extinct, DKWs were manufactured by the German Auto Union, later acquired by Mercedes-Benz. The DKW engine was a three cylinder, two-stroke masterpiece of simplicity with only “seven moving parts.” The front doors opened to the front. They were great fun to drive! And, as I will describe later, in Japan we drove a very small Honda car with a 360 c.c. air-cooled motorcycle engine that our family used to travel all around Japan (**Photo #24**). Other vehicles that might fit the “eccentric” category were two Pontiac Fiero “sports cars,” a Vauxhall station wagon manufactured by British General Motors, and VW “Rabbit” and “Dasher” diesels. As was the case with our DKWs, almost all of the makes and models that we selected went out of production shortly after we purchased ours. Someone else will have to discern whether there is a deep meaning in all of this, but that is what happened. I am sure that much more could be said about my personality, and some of these other tendencies will be apparent to the perceptive reader, but I will leave it at that.

One last comment: When I reflect on how I have lived my life, and how I have chosen to formulate these memoirs, it is clear to me that I am an “institutionalist.” That is, I am convinced that much of our behavior is shaped by the social institutions in which we participate and that most of our ideas and many of our sentiments originate in the beliefs and practices of the cultural environment in which we live and have our being. We might react, reformulate, or revise, but few of us invent patterns of ideas or behavior that are truly new. This does not mean that we should simply accept and replicate the institutions around us as they are, but it does mean that we should pay attention to those institutions, and that one way in which we can fulfill our high calling as human beings to “love our neighbors as ourselves” is to do what we can to make sure that our institutions, like the organs in a body, are “healthy” and functioning as well as possible. If there are high rates of physical, emotional and drug abuse in our families, we need to think about how relationships in our families are structured. If people of color experience high rates of discrimination in our educational, justice, and public health institutions, we need to pay attention to that. If large numbers of people are leaving their churches and shuttering their buildings, we need to ask why they are leaving and where they are going. What we do NOT need to do is assume either that we need to hang onto our institutions exactly as we inherited them, or that we can

abandon our institutions because we do not need them. That is what I mean when I use the word “institutionalist.” Much of my life has been organized around ideas like that.

That is a brief account of some of the major events in my life: “Just the facts, ma’am,” as Detective Joe Friday used to say on the old *Dragnet* TV series. But, as I indicated in my introductory comments, I did not live my life in a vacuum. My personal story is but one small chapter in a much larger social and cultural narrative. In the next section I will briefly review some stories from the pilgrimages of our ancestors that set the context for my life and then, in Part Two, I will describe some of the social institutions and cultural ideas and practices that we in my generation inherited from our forebears.

FAMILY STORIES: WHERE DID WE COME FROM?

Of course everybody comes from somewhere, but I do not think that is something that we Americans think about very often. The version of the story of where we came from that I remember growing up with was not very complimentary. As a young person growing up in Reedley, I had some vague sense of a shared history of our Mennonite forbears suffering persecution and migrating from place to place. I knew that my great-grandparents and my grandfather Enns had come to the U.S. from Russia and that they had lived and farmed for a time in Kansas and Nebraska, where we still had relatives, but I did not know until I was well into adulthood that in 1901 my great-grandfather Enns made a return trip to visit kin in Russia who had stayed behind. So I had little sense of continuity with my relatives who had remained in Russia, about whom I still know nothing, or even with the relatives in Nebraska and Kansas with whom my folks visited but whom I did not know personally. I knew that Mennonites had suffered discrimination for some combination of traits that included the Dutch/German language and culture and distinctive religious convictions (including pacifism), because those were still stigmatizing issues in Reedley even as late as my childhood years during WW II. I will say a lot more about what it means to be “Anabaptist” and “Mennonite,” but as a young person I had only the vaguest notions about the stories of the Anabaptist "Radical Reformers" in Switzerland, Menno Simons' leadership of the "Peaceful Anabaptists" in Holland, migrations to Poland and then later to southern Russia, and, finally, to North America.

I have no recollection of hearing the dramatic stories of the suffering and death of Anabaptists as recorded in *The Martyrs' Mirror*, a massive tome of some 1,700 pages first published in Holland in 1660. Probably the most famous of those many martyr tales is that of Dirk Willems, Dutch Anabaptist,

who, in 1569, was imprisoned because of his illegal faith. He managed to escape from his prison cell in an old castle by climbing down a rope that he fashioned by tying some rags together. He then ran across a frozen pond but the officer who was chasing him was not so fortunate. Just as Dirk reached the other side of the pond, the ice behind him gave way. His pursuer fell into the freezing water and called for help. Instead of using this good fortune to complete his escape, Willems went back to rescue the drowning official, who promptly re-arrested him. Willems was burned at the stake on May 16, 1569.

I did not know that once persecution of Anabaptists stopped in the Netherlands in 1571, many of these *Doopsgesinde* (“baptism minded,” the term used for Anabaptists in Holland instead of Mennonite) became wealthy and powerful. I do not remember learning that our ancestors had spent a century in Poland, building dikes to push back the sea to create productive farmland. While in Poland the Mennonites also established prosperous businesses and built flourishing church communities. A Mennonite named Adam Wiebe, for example, was a leading engineer who helped design and construct fortifications and dikes in the Polish city of Danzig.

So as I grew up many of us did share somewhat of a sense of a common history, but we had little information and my impressions of our heritage were not very positive. I mostly thought of my Mennonite ancestors as simple-minded country “hicks” who could not even speak English very well. If anything, I think I grew up feeling somewhat embarrassed by the little that I did know about my historical background. With that as an impression of our ancestral story, it is easy to understand why assimilation into the “main stream” and becoming “normal” Americans felt like a good thing. Actually, like most Americans, I grew up without any notion that history of any kind was all that important.

In any case, I still remember how shocked I was when I first saw a collection of photographs of the Mennonites in South Russia (now Ukraine) that showed something entirely different. These new impressions were confirmed in 1997 when we participated in the Mennonite Heritage Cruise down the Dnieper River from Kiev to Odessa in Ukraine. We did this very interesting and enjoyable trip together with my father, who found great delight in handing out candy to kids in the formerly Mennonite village of Altonau where his father had been born. The Mennonites in Russia lived in houses that might have had a barn for animals attached but they were, nevertheless, substantial and attractive. They constructed beautiful cathedral-like church buildings, some with floors that were covered with tiles from Italy and arched, stained glass windows. I picked up one of these broken floor tiles when we

were in Ukraine and I now keep it in our patio, along with an old roof tile that was made in a Mennonite kiln.

The building that housed the *Centralshule* (High School) in Halbstadt where Ruth's grandfather was Headmaster was reminiscent of Greek architecture with its striking columns, and other Mennonite buildings were similarly impressive. There were schools and hospitals and other social service institutions such as a school for nurses, and homes for orphans, the blind, the elderly and the developmentally disabled. There were large factories that produced clocks and farm equipment that were sold across Russia and beyond. At one point 10% of the farm equipment sold in S. Russia was manufactured in Mennonite factories. There were Mennonite breweries (Prohibitions against alcohol came later.) and huge grain elevators. Some of the leaders of church and society, including Ruth's grandfather, received their advanced educations in Germany and Switzerland. Photos from the period just prior to the Russian revolution show Mennonite young people wearing the latest fashions, riding in stately carriages pulled by handsome horses, or lounging about, strumming their balalaikas and guitars with bottles of alcohol prominently displayed nearby. There is even a photo of three Russian Mennonite men who built their own version of the Wright brothers' airplane way back in 1907. They were anything but the "hicks" of my earliest impressions.

Ruth grew up with a version of our Mennonite story that was quite different from mine. Part of the story that I did not know much about was that some of the Mennonites in Russia, including some of Ruth's relatives, were well educated and extremely wealthy. They lived in magnificent mansions on vast estates. We were not really aware of her background during the time we knew Ruth's "Aunt Evangeline" (Rempel) Dyck in Pasadena, but a family history, *From the Steppes to the Prairies* compiled by Ruth's second cousin, Paul Klassen, makes it clear that Ruth's extended family was connected with the "aristocratic" class in the Mennonite communities in Russia. Ruth's Neufeld grandmother was a daughter of Gustav Rempel, whose photos bear a striking resemblance to Ruth's father, Herman. Aunt Evangeline Rempel's sister married into the Klassen family who owned not just one but *four* large estates. Marienskaya was located on about 6000 acres some 120 miles northeast of the Molotschna colony in southern Russia. Davidfeld was on about 4,500 acres near the Black Sea on the Crimean Peninsula and Prigorye was on 3000 acres about one and one half miles from the Mennonite village of Altonau in the Molotschna colony where my grandfather Enns was born under far more modest circumstances. Petrovskaya, on 4,270 acres purchased in 1912, was located north of

Ukraine, far from the Mennonite colonies. A brief excerpt from Klassen's book will give some impression of what Prigorye, the smallest of the estates, was like (p. 51).

Our grandparents moved to Prigorye in 1905. In 1906 a brick kiln had been erected on the site, the bricks being used in the complete renovation of the estate, including the erection of a large, elegant three story red brick house of 38 rooms, cottages for the permanent farm laborers and substantial brick barns, granaries and other buildings. At the rear of the house there was a small lake fed by an artesian well. A bath house accessed by a walkway was built over the edge of the lake. There were large vegetable gardens and an orchard of various fruits including apples, pears, plums, peaches, apricots, grapes, cherries, and berries... There was a mounted guard who patrolled the estate to detect and deter stealing, a gardener, seven Russian and German house maids and 35 to 40 horse trainers, coachmen, sheep and cattle herdsman, and field laborers, excluding the temporary help, both male and female, at harvest.

Klassen also mentions that the estate housed some "exotic animals" such as giraffes and antelope. He notes that a favorite coachman drove the family about in a "phaeton" carriage pulled by two horses and that a new German Opel purchased in 1912 was one of the first automobiles in the district. Photos of Aunt Evangeline and other relatives in and around the Klassen estates show elegant architectural detail, fine interior furnishings, and the latest fashions in clothing. For all of that, the Klassen estates were relatively modest compared to the Reimerhoff estate, which included a mansion with 74 rooms, and the estate of a Mr. Janzen who owned more than 53,400 acres. The Reimers were related to the Klassens through marriage. Those were the "golden years" of the Mennonite "Commonwealth" in Russia, and the Neufeld family was part of the upper tier of Mennonite society.

I grew up vaguely aware that our Mennonite ancestors had experienced severe suffering in Russia, but I did not really understand until much later that extreme differences between the wealthy estate owners (The communists called them *kulaks*.) and their impoverished "landless" fellow Mennonites and their poor Russian and Ukrainian neighbors were bound to lead to trouble. And, indeed, trouble did come, sometimes in the form of bands of anarchist bandits. One such "band" (a small private army, actually) was led by the notorious Nestor Machno, who spoke some Low German because he had once worked for Mennonites, who, he felt had underpaid him so he was out for revenge. The Bolshevik revolution, the chaos of World War I as the German army and the "Reds" (communists), "Whites" (defending the government) of the Russian military, and the murderous bands lead by anarchist Machno all battled back and forth across the Mennonite lands as first one side and then another prevailed. And then, finally,

came Stalin's programs of "Collectivization," which meant that the Soviets took control of the estates of "kulaks" like the Klassens. The Klassens and all Mennonites in Russia lost pretty much everything, suffered unspeakable hardships, were eventually scattered across Siberia in boxcars, and were murdered, imprisoned, and died of starvation by the thousands. The lucky ones were able to emigrate, but even that was not the end of their suffering. The former estate owner, Mr. Klassen, who was able to emigrate to Canada, was reduced to picking up chunks of coal that had been dropped along the railroad tracks in Ontario, Canada in order to keep his family from freezing in their "temporary" residence in a small, drafty "summer kitchen."

My Unruh ancestors avoided the really hard times in Russia because they had been part of the first large migration of Mennonites out of Russia, back in 1874. My Enns forbears also left early, in 1884, so both of my ancestral families were part of a mass migration of about 18,000 Mennonites, approximately one third of the entire population of Mennonites in Russia at that time. They left because the Russian government was threatening to revoke their "privileges," including their exemption from military service, but also because poor, landless Mennonites saw better economic opportunities in North America. And there were eventually many landless Mennonites in the colonies in Russia. As many as two-thirds of households were landless, meaning that they had nothing to sell except their labor, and since only land owners were permitted to vote, they were also politically powerless and socially marginalized. The migrations that my ancestors were part of alleviated some of the pressure, as did the establishment of a series of "daughter" colonies in various parts of Russia, but, still, there were huge economic disparities within the Mennonite communities.

Ruth's grandparents and her father, who was 14 years old at the time, left Russia in 1910, also before the real suffering began. The Wilhelm Neufeld family left positions of leadership in the Mennonite communities and they left with substantial sums of money from the sale of their properties in Russia, which, reportedly included large land holdings in Siberia, some of which they simply left behind. We are not aware of any written account of the economic circumstances of the Wilhelm Neufelds back in Russia, but the story of their emigration and subsequent activities provides clear evidence of considerable wealth. The family travelled from southern Russia, first north to Moscow and then west to Germany, where they spent one year before continuing on to Galveston, Texas, and then to California. We still have the remnants of a set of dinnerware that the family purchased during their year in Germany. After their arrival in Reedley in 1911, Wilhelm Neufeld purchased 80 acres of farmland in the lowlands between the town of Reedley and the Kings River. They owned a relatively modest

residence on Friesen Avenue on the west edge of the town, but, to provide some perspective, my Enns and Unruh grandparents each owned farms that were only about 20 acres in size at about that same time. Reports are that Wilhelm Neufeld might have been a fine educator and church leader but he was not a very good farmer, so oldest son, Herman (Ruth's father), returned to Reedley after studying for two years at the University of California, Davis to help his father with the farming while the other Neufeld children continued on with their higher educations.

When reports of the suffering that the Mennonites were experiencing in Russia reached the Neufelds in Reedley, Wilhelm and Margarethe travelled to Russia in 1922 with a small group of fellow Mennonites to explore ways to help their suffering kin and other fellow church members. They worked with the newly organized Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) that had been established in 1920. This agency was enormously helpful in assisting thousands of Mennonites in Russia with food and agricultural supplies, including tractors. The wife of Wilhelm Neufeld's brother-in-law, Gustav Rempel, died of dysentery in 1920 and Gustav himself died of typhoid fever in 1922 while on a trip to assist two relatives who had just been released from prison. The Rempels left behind five orphaned children, including Ruth's "Aunt Evangeline" and "Uncle Frank" whom we knew well during our seminary days in Pasadena. Older brother Heinrich had been shot in 1918 by Machno's band of anarchists while he was travelling with a caravan of seven wagons transporting household furnishings and other goods from the Klassen's Marienskaya estate to the safer Mennonite village of Gnadenfeld in the Molotschna colony. To provide just one gruesome detail that illustrates the suffering that Mennonites and many others endured in those days: Heinrich's eyes were gouged out with a bayonet before he was shot and his body covered with a bit of dirt and snow in a dry streambed. Of course this was just the beginning of the massive suffering that many of the Russian people experienced under Stalin's version of communism. Estimates are that 20 – 30 million people died because of his policies.

Wilhelm Neufeld managed to arrange for the orphaned Rempel children, then in their teens and early adulthood, to travel by rail (in a box car) to Moscow and then out of Russia, first to Germany and then on to California. One sister remained in Russia because she had recently become engaged and opted to stay with her fiancée. Aunt Evangeline had letters written by this older sister describing the incredible suffering that she and her family had to endure during their time in Stalin's *gulag* in Siberia, where they eventually died. The emigrating group resided for a time in a school house that Wilhelm Neufeld purchased in Germany for the temporary use of Mennonite refugees from Russia. The Rempel children stayed there while Wilhelm Neufeld arranged for transportation to and entrance into the United

States. Most of the Rempel children first lived in Reedley before going on to complete various forms of higher education, and later, distinguished professional careers. Evangeline was a nurse, Frank an architect, Herman a chemist, Arthur was a long-time professor of biology at Whitman College in Washington, and Dietrich was a wealthy inventor and entrepreneur in Ohio. We do not know the details of how all of this was financed, but the Wilhelm Neufelds reportedly sold at least some of their farm land in Reedley in order to accomplish all of this, providing an example of what Christian stewardship of financial resources looks like.

There are several reasons why the Neufeld version of the Mennonite story differs substantially from the version that I grew up with. Generational remoteness is one difference. My grandfather Enns was only eight years old when his family emigrated from Russia in 1884 and my three other grandparents were born in the U.S. Ruth's father was a teenager when the family left Russia so he brought with him many personal memories from the "old country" that he could share with his children. There were socio-economic class and educational differences as well—and these were related to patterns of emigration from Russia. It is almost a sociological truism that landless and other poorer people tend to emigrate earlier, since they have less "stake" in the old country, while persons who occupy higher positions in the class system tend to stay longer because they find the status quo more satisfying. What little I know about the class background of my ancestors is consistent with this generalization. My great-grandfather Unruh is reported to have worked as an apprentice blacksmith in Russia before joining one of the first waves of Mennonite migrations to leave Russia in 1874. The Unruh family settled in Henderson, Nebraska where he eventually became a successful farmer. My Enns ancestors had already migrated once from the village of Altonau in the Molotschna colony where my grandfather was born, to the village of Buragan on the Crimean Peninsula, before a second migration to Buhler, Kansas in 1884 and then a third big move to Central California in 1904.

Ruth's great-grandfather, Peter Neufeld, in contrast, was the first photographer in the Mennonite colonies and he also founded a printing press that eventually became the *Raduga* press, the largest such establishment in the Mennonite colonies. I have already reported that Ruth's grandfather, Wilhelm Neufeld, graduated from a seminary in Germany, was a leader in the Mennonite churches and schools in Russia, and was a person of some wealth, so the family's departure from Russia in 1910 came as a considerable surprise in the community. People with that much status, wealth and influence do not usually pack up and leave. So the version of the Mennonite story that Ruth inherited has many more heroic elements than mine. Her version, one might expect, would provide a much more powerful "glue"

to hold the community together than mine, but it did not really turn out that way. The vast majority of Ruth's relatives joined the great Mennonite "diaspora" who are scattered across the U.S., leaving behind the communities and much of the faith and culture of their Mennonite ancestors.

Partly because of this long history of persecutions, migrations, and social and cultural isolation, our ancestors became an "ethno-religious people," meaning that they developed their own unique combination of cultural and religious beliefs and social practices that set them apart from their neighbors. I will next describe what it meant for me to grow up in the Reedley version of a Mennonite "old world" of close social relationships, a shared culture, and a religious faith that helped to hold everything together. For a time, at least, until almost everything changed.

PART TWO: THE OLD WORLD: BEING MINNONITE IN REEDLEY

MENNONITE SOCIETY: UNDER A SACRED CANOPY

There are many ways to describe the old society in which I and many members of my generation grew up. I have come to believe that one of the main characteristics of “The World We Have Lost” is that the institutions of society were integrated into a largely coherent whole. Almost everything was directly connected to and inter-related with almost everything else. The several parts of society were not separate from one another in different “compartments,” but they were interdependent, like organs in a body, and they overlapped like circles in a Venn diagram. To illustrate very briefly what I mean: What happens in a family is shaped by political decisions and economic conditions in the surrounding society. Family dynamics impact school performances and schools serve as “sorting machines,” helping to channel students into one location or another in the socio-economic class system. Religious convictions are important in shaping how we evaluate what happens in the family, school, politics, and economy, but religious convictions are also impacted by what is going on in the surrounding world. All of this (and much more) is influenced by location in the class system and there is great variation between different racial and ethnic groups. Of course social institutions are inter-related in both the old and new worlds, but the connections were much more direct in the old world.

So everything is, indeed, connected to everything. I will use Peter Berger’s metaphor of religion as a “sacred canopy” to make the case that in the old world religion uniquely covered over all of the other institutions of society and helped to hold it all together. If there was a “center” to society and culture, it was religion. It would be best if everything could be described at the same time, but since I do not know how to do that, I will focus on one part of the social system at a time, adding comments about connections with other parts of the whole as I go along, and I will illustrate what all of this means with recollections from my own life.

FAMILY: WHO BELONGS?

In my extended family, relationships were particularly “thick,” since my father (Jack) and two of his brothers (John and Edwin) married my mother (Elsie Unruh) and two of her sisters (Susan and Dorothy), so I had nine “double cousins” (plus my own two brothers and one sister) whom I met at nearly every

family gathering, whether at the Enns grandparents, the Unruh grandparents or at weddings and funerals that involved members of our extended families. During most of my childhood years our family regularly attended “family gatherings” of the extended families on Sunday afternoons at one, or, more often, both of the grandparents' homes. While we kids played outside (I once broke cousin Marvin Just Jr.'s leg playing tackle football, which was forbidden, out on Grandparents Unruh's front lawn.) or sat in the car and listened to the radio (“The Shadow knows...”), the women talked in the kitchen, mostly about family matters while the men sat in the living room and discussed everything else—including farming and business since families on both sides were involved in one or both of these occupations.

As if regular Sunday family get-togethers were not enough, my mother, her four sisters and my Grandma Unruh met one day almost every week during most of their adult years for what they called their “outing.” I do not know what all of their topics of conversation were, but while we kids played outside, our mothers sat in the kitchen and talked. I was sometimes upset that my cousins could report to me at school the day after an “outing” things that I had done that I thought were none of their business.

There were occasional gatherings of our larger Enns and Unruh extended families, also. We have a photo (**cover photo**) of my Enns great-grandparents with all (or almost all) of their children and grandchildren, including my father who was about four years old at the time. (He is in the front row, fourth from the right.) There are 57 Enns family members in the photo. Much later, during another extended Enns gathering on the beach on the west side of the Kings River below what is now the Immanuel campus in Reedley, I was charged with the responsibility of watching my baby sister, Eleanor, who was lying on her blanket near the edge of the fast-flowing river. When all of my little cousins chased after a small fish that they found trapped in a shallow stretch of water nearby, the temptation was too much for me so off I ran off to join them, leaving my little sister by herself. While I was away, baby Eleanor managed to roll over, off her blanket—and down the short, sandy incline into the river. Fortunately, my father was watching so he was able to rush to her rescue, leaving me with a life-long conviction that I need to take my responsibilities very seriously!

My point here is that I grew up in a context where extended family relationships were much more important than is common today. I used to say that when I was a child I was known as John Unruh's grandson. As my father became more prominent, I was Jack Enns' son. When my brother, Harold, was a public figure in the community, I was Harold's brother. Sometimes I was Ruth's husband, and then Terri, Connie and Karen's father. When I said that I was always defined by my family

relationships and never really got to be my own person, I was only half joking. (Neufeld and Enns extended families are in **photos #12 and 13.**)

I think I should digress to say something about how we use the word “family.” It is undoubtedly one of the most elastic words in the English language since it can be stretched to include so many different kinds of groupings—a couple, a couple or a single parent with one or more children, an extended group of relatives, almost any kind of organization, including church groups (our “church family”), businesses (the “Wal-Mart family”), schools (the “University of California family”), or even the United Nations as the “family of nations.” But I think in the 1950s the word usually had a more particular meaning. It primarily meant the “nuclear” or “domestic” family unit. Families have not always looked like the typical American domestic family of the 1950s in other times and places, though. In most family systems through most of human history the “nuclear” unit of married parents and their children was not the most important part of the family at all. The “extended” family had much higher priority. So, instead of thinking of husband, wife, and children as in some sense the central, or core, or fundamental (“nuclear”) unit of the family and the larger kinship group as just a secondary “extension” of the more basic nuclear unit, in many other times and places it made better sense to think of it as the other way around. It was the extended family that was the most important unit and what we call the “nuclear” family was just a subset or subsidiary of that. In fact, it might be more accurate to think of what we call the nuclear family as the “broken,” or “fragment,” or “residual” family that is all that is left after the really important extended family has ceased to exist as a functioning social unit. Thinking about it that way, it is no surprise that many of our nuclear families are broken, and increasing numbers of people are choosing not to start one at all. It is too small, fragile and isolated as a social institution to bear the heavy weight of emotional and other expectations that we load onto it.

The traditional Japanese family system provides an example of what I mean. In some areas in Japan, an extended family structure called the *douzoku* played a very important role in society. The *douzoku* consisted of a “main” or “stem” family that went back several generations and then there were “branch” families that were subsidiaries of the main family. A branch family was set up by the main family and the primary loyalty of the branch family was expected to be to the main family and its related branches, not to their own smaller, nuclear unit. Branch families received their property from the main family and they were expected to give high priority to furthering the interests of the larger family, to guarding the family reputation, and to preserving the traditions of the *douzoku* as the really important, larger corporate unit.

If my extended Enns family had functioned like a *douzoku*, then my uncle Art, the oldest son, would have inherited the D. M. Enns family farm. Uncle Art, as the next patriarch of the main family, would have made every effort to make sure that his younger brothers were established on their own farms or businesses and that the sisters married into the best possible families. Since my uncle John was the second oldest male in the family, he would have received financial and other assistance from Uncle Art in establishing Enns Pontiac. Uncle John's family would have been the first "branch" family off the main line, and my dad would have been next, so our family would have been the second branch of the main D. M. Enns family line. Uncle John, my father, and all of us would have been helped by the larger corporate family unit and we would feel obligated, in turn, to do everything we could to make sure that Uncle Art and Cousin Roger, the next in line in the main branch of the family, did well. Perhaps the best analogy for this kind of large family unit are franchises that are set up and supported by the "parent" corporation and are then expected to contribute to the well-being of the "parent" corporation. Nuclear families were like "subsidiaries" of the main extended family units.

Needless to say, extended family relationships in our own family history were never as important as the *douzoku* in Japan, but they were certainly far more important a few generations ago than they are now. Extended families often migrated together, first out of Russia and then within North America, as when Dietrich T Enns and his children and grandchildren moved from Central Kansas to the Reedley-Dinuba and Shafter-Wasco areas in the San Joaquin Valley in California. Some extended families still have "family reunions" where relatives who are several generations removed gather from time to time, but such gatherings now have more to do with nostalgia than substantive matters like shared economic and political relationships, and they are certainly not responsible for arranging the marriages of the children as families in Japan once were. In my own situation, I sometimes meet some of my cousins at weddings or funerals, but we have not even tried to organize an extended Enns or Unruh family gathering for more than four decades. The four of us Enns siblings try to meet for dinner twice a year or so but sometimes we cannot even accomplish that. We enjoyed having some of the members of our extended family join us for a gathering of the descendants of my parents during the 2013 holiday season but many of the cousins had not seen each other for many years and some of the spouses met their kin by marriage for the first time. As I am trying to illustrate in these recollections, extended family relationships in the "old world" were much more important than they are in the new because relatives more often resided in proximity to one another and they were woven into a larger fabric of institutional relationships that included shared economic, religious, and other social relationships.

One way in which Christian faith shaped the family might seem trivial, but perhaps it was not. Virtually all of the persons in my grandparents' generation had biblical names--Abraham, Jacob, Peter, John, Sarah, Marie, Elizabeth, etc., though a few did not (e.g. my great-grandmother's name was Margarethe and my grandfather and great-grandfather were named Dietrich M and Dietrich T Enns). I have not done a precise count, but I think perhaps about half of my relatives in my parent's generation had biblical names, approximately one half did not (including three of the five Unruh sisters: Emma, Elsie, Dorothy). Because the number of favorite names from the Bible is somewhat limited, many members of the earlier generations had middle initials that were not abbreviations of middle names. I have mentioned that my grandfather had the middle initial "M" and my great-grandfather "T." My father had the middle initial "W" to distinguish him from the many other men in the Mennonite community who were also named Jacob Enns. My uncle John Enns had the middle initial "E" to distinguish him from other Enns relatives named John "M", John "F," etc. Another convention was to use double names, such as Peter Peter and Jacob Jacob Enns. Few relatives in my generation and even fewer in my children's generation have biblical names. I do not want to make too much of this, but perhaps this declining use of biblical names reflects a weakening sense of identification with the biblical narrative and an increasing degree of conformity to what was "normal" in the surrounding culture. In this new world, personal names are used more as an expression of individual preference and even creativity than as a means of linkage with the past. To use a term that I will elaborate on later, personal names have been "secularized." They have been separated from religious influences or control.

Family names were once significant markers of personal identity. Some family names came from locations (e.g. "Neufeld," the "new field," "Enns," a river and town in Austria), others from occupations (e.g. "Schmidt" is from "blacksmith," "Reimer" from "leather worker"). During some of my army days, one of the names I was known by was my occupation, "Medic," as in "Hey, Medic, you got a light?" (I was asked this question so often that I eventually carried a lighter, just to help my friends.) I reported to Ruth that many of the guys in my unit had no other name for me, even though "Enns" was embroidered on a patch sewed onto my shirts and jackets. Some names are derived from other characteristics, such as "Unruh," meaning "unsettled," or "restless." From whatever sources, family names provided important ethnic information, leading to questions about which part of a family and community an individual was from. So, when I was introduced as an "Enns" in MB circles, a frequent next question was "What kind of Enns are you?" I usually knew how to answer that question, though the answer varied with the identity of the person doing the asking, and with the situation. The answer

might be “My dad is Jack, the car dealer,” or “The Dietrich Enns who lives about two miles south of Reedley is my grandpa,” or “Harold who is on the board of the seminary is my brother.” Exchanges such as this were part of the “Mennonite game” that provided markers for socio-religious identity—and also involved a peculiar type of fun.

Many of our relatives and friends could not understand it when our daughters decided to continue to use their family names after their marriages. Terri and Karen both continued to use their family names (Terri Enns and Karen Enns) and Connie used a hyphenated name, Connie Enns-Rempel. The widely held expectation was that marriage meant the end of the use of the name of the wife’s family but our daughters did not want that to happen.

One incident involving “Mennonite” names happened in the dining hall when I was a graduate student at UCSB. I was with a group of IVCF friends when a person I had never met joined us. When I learned that her name was “Penner,” I started the “Mennonite game” by asking where she was from, and when the answer was “Shafter,” I could be almost certain that she was a fellow Mennonite. So within just a few sentences, we had exchanged the names of people that we knew in common and we were looking for ways in which we might be related. Our small audience around the table was incredulous. “How did you do that?” was their question. Many people who belong to an ethnic sub-community understand how this works. I am struck that these days family names are seldom used in introductions. I am just “Bob,” and that seems to be good enough. All of the ethno-religious information that is carried in the family name has been lost, for better and for worse. Perhaps this, too, is part of the end of the “old world.”

In these memoirs I am emphasizing the social structures and cultural beliefs and practices that many of us shared in common, but, as is clear even from my own immediate family, each of us also charts our own course within that environment. Society does not stamp us out all the same like a cookie-cutter. We human beings are not simply puppets dangling from strings, nor programmed robots. We are free to make choices and those choices do make a difference.

RELIGION: A SACRED CANOPY

In our old ethno-religious Mennonite world, family and religion were closely linked. My great-grandfather, Dietrich T Enns, was the first lay leader (Professional pastors came later.) of the Reedley MB Church when it was first organized in 1905 and my Enns and Unruh relatives have served in leadership positions in the congregation down through the decades. My father's uncle Peter and, later,

his cousin Ernie were choir directors in the Reedley M.B church for many decades. My mother's aunt Marie Unruh Friesen (who was the great-grandmother of my grandson Chris' wife Britni Friesen) was the first organist and my father's brother, Richard, was one of the early pianists in the Reedley MB church. My grandfathers, uncles, father, brother, cousins and other relatives have served on numerous committees and other leadership positions in the Reedley congregation. My grandfather Unruh was a member of the board of trustees of the Reedley MB Church for 27 years and both my brother Harold and cousin Marvin Just Jr. served as lay leaders of the congregation. It is probably more than just a coincidence that Connie and Kevin have served in key leadership positions in the College Community Church, just as Ruth and I did.

Family members not only supported the work of the church in these and many other ways, but the church also set many of the parameters for family relationships. A prohibition against being "unequally yoked" in marriage once extended to marriage between an MB church member and anyone outside the MB denomination. The stigma attached to marrying an "outsider" continued until as late as our marriage in 1957 when there were still questions and suspicions about my marrying a person from another Mennonite denomination, and real "outsiders" who married into a Mennonite family felt a sense of social distance for a very long time—even for generations. There was a tradition that a couple would "announce" their plans to marry in the church two weeks prior to the wedding, partly in order to provide time for any concerns or objections to the marriage to be voiced. I do not recall that that ever happened during my lifetime, but it did indicate that the church had a stake in the marriages of its members. As was the custom, Ruth and I dressed in our finest for our own "announcement Sunday" in June, 1957 (**Photo #9**).

Behavior in weddings that was "appropriate" was clearly defined by the church. My parents reported that my mother was among the first to wear a special bridal dress and that a kiss was not allowed during the wedding ceremony at the time of their marriage. I do not recall being present for such an event, but couples who gave birth "too soon" after their wedding were expected to provide an explanation or, if appropriate, a public apology to the congregation--or, at least, to the church leadership. Divorce (except for sexual unfaithfulness) and remarriage after a divorce were strictly prohibited. It was easy, in those days, to take it for granted that marriage was between "one man and one woman" and it was "for life." Nuclear families, then, were not simply private "castles," nor were they isolated "island" retreats from the heartless outside world, but they were deeply imbedded in the church, extended family,

and community relationships that provided support and assistance but also came with clear expectations and obligations. Privileges and responsibilities were two sides of the same coin.

As was typical in Christian communities that were heavily influenced by pietism (which I will explain later), there was a strong emphasis in our MB communities on Bible study and prayer, both public and private. In fact, it seems to me that there was a greater emphasis on personal Bible study and prayer than on the ethical teachings and example of Jesus, or on the nature of Christian community. I am sure that we heard much more about the importance of the devotional life than we did about the importance of loving our neighbors as ourselves--and extending this love even to our "enemies." Many smaller group gatherings looked much like miniature worship services. Chapel services at Immanuel (and, later, Pacific Bible Institute and Pacific College), for example, took the form of a somewhat abbreviated Sunday morning worship service, as did the brief assemblies that preceded our gender-specific and age-graded Sunday school classes.

Another context for a miniature worship service was the regular practice in our family, as in many other pious MB and evangelical families, of "family devotions," something that I recall as being uncomfortable and somewhat embarrassing. We would sit in a circle and my father would read a passage from the Bible and then he would pray. Sometimes we would each pray in turn. Also sometimes embarrassing was the common practice of praying out loud before every meal, whether at home or in a public place such as in a restaurant. Being silently and privately grateful for one's daily bread did not seem to be adequate. Verbal expressions of thanks seemed to be required. In his later years, Ruth's uncle Dietrich Dyck would sometimes carry this to an extreme, praying on and on and around the world while the food was getting cold, until Aunt Evangeline would nudge him under the table and say "That is enough, Dietrich." Differences in practices related to giving thanks for food in public places gave rise to one of the few Mennonite jokes that I can recall—and I am pretty sure that this is only funny to people who are part of the in-group. "You can always tell the difference between Mennonite Brethren (MB), "Old" Mennonites (MC) and General Conference Mennonites (GC) in a restaurant. Before eating their meal, MBs pray out loud. MC's pray silently. GCs just eat." In any case, these forms of replication of churchly practices in other settings reinforced the importance of recognizing that Christian influences should permeate every area of one's life.

As is implicit in what I have described so far, we spent a lot more time in church than just the Sunday morning worship services. Our Sunday school classes on Sunday mornings were preceded by a kind of "assembly" for the larger group before we divided into our several classes (divided by age and

gender). The assembly provided another opportunity for a miniature worship service that included, as I recall, prayers, songs, scripture readings, and brief meditations. After our Sunday school classes came the main Sunday morning worship service, sometimes followed by communion and, less frequently, "foot-washing," both of which were "closed," for members only. Foot-washing was a very old and long-standing tradition that was taken very seriously in many Mennonite communities, but it always seemed very odd and embarrassing to me. The men gathered on one side of the sanctuary and the women separated as far as possible on the other side. Everyone took off their shoes and socks, which required that the women roll down their Sunday stockings. We gathered in small groups around basins carried in for the event and each person washed the feet of one other person in the small basin that would normally have been used for hand-washing, and then that person took his or her turn washing someone else's feet. The whole church smelled like Lysol disinfectant. Foot-washing might have been an ancient religious tradition that was once rich in social and spiritual meaning, but it did not feel that way to me as a child. Ruth and I did experience one meaningful foot-washing ceremony with some fellow Mennonite missionaries in Japan, so we know that it can be done well. It just does not fit very naturally into our new world.

There were Sunday evening "6:30 Meetings" for young people that we called "Christian Endeavor" (CE) though I do not know whether the Reedley MB church had a formal relationship with the national CE organization. We took turns leading the meetings that were somewhat like a cross between a business meeting (with a chairman, minutes, etc.) and a miniature worship service with prayer, special music and a brief meditation, all done by us young people (often necessitating a fair degree of coercion). Once a month or so we young people were in charge of the Sunday evening worship service for the entire church. We presented the best of what we had produced during our 6:30 meetings. Those CE programs were the only church sessions that I remember really looking forward to. Wednesday evenings were for "Prayer Meetings," which consisted of, first, a miniature worship service for everyone in the larger groups (age graded) and then dividing into smaller groups by age and gender for discussion of a Bible passage and a time of small group prayer. I think the church choir rehearsed on Wednesday evenings, with their own brief "devotional" time. I do not recall that we had a summer "Daily Vacation Bible School" when I was a child. I think Daily Vacation Bible School came later.

There were other meetings at the church, such as business meetings for the members, fellowship meals connected with special events such as the "Harvest Festival" (usually several sessions during a weekend with a "missions emphasis"), periodic weeklong, nightly "Revival Meetings" with special guest

speakers who were good at encouraging people to think about the condition of their souls (usually with a substantial portion of guilt and fear included), occasional special evening presentations from traveling missionaries or MCC workers, the annual Sunday School Picnic at Mooney's Grove in Visalia, etc. etc. The church provided many occasions for gathering, and, in our family at least, there was a strong expectation that when the church gathered, we should be present and we should participate. Not only that, but there was also an expectation that one should attend church on Sunday morning even when away from home on vacation. I will say a lot more about this later, but one of the big changes that has happened during my lifetime is that church activities are greatly reduced in number and people feel increasingly free to pick and choose the events in which they will participate. Church is optional, no longer "required" by social expectations. The result is that time spent in church has decreased substantially. The changes are even more remarkable if we think about how central the church was in social and cultural life back in Russia just a few generations ago.

There were many ways in which Sundays, the church buildings, and the pastor were "set apart" as special, sacred, and "Holy." Many good Mennonites refused to do any "work" at all on Sundays, treating it in many ways as a Christian equivalent of the Jewish Sabbath. When I was in high school we were discouraged from playing sports on Sunday afternoons. We were not actually prohibited from playing football or basketball or going swimming with our friends on Sunday afternoons because we did, but it was made pretty clear to us that this was only marginally acceptable and was not really in keeping with the spirit of the "Lord's Day." We had "Sunday clothes" because it was appropriate to "dress up" to go to church as an expression of respect for God and the community. The "Saturday night bath" was part of preparing for attendance in Sunday church activities. This was before my time because we showered and bathed more frequently, but a bath was a really big deal when it happened only once a week, so this, too, was part of marking Sunday as a very "special" day that merited special preparations. Church buildings, too, were special, so we were discouraged from running or shouting in the sanctuary. Sticking used chewing gum under the benches, or, even worse, carving initials in the old wooden benches were fairly serious acts of rebelliousness, but they did happen. And, of course, the pastor was a person to whom great respect was due. We almost always used "Mister," "Miss" and "Mrs." and family names in addressing adults, and I could not even imagine during my growing up years calling our pastors by their first names, a sentiment that made it difficult for me even as an adult to call our pastors "Waldo" or "Werner," or "JB." They were Reverend (or Pastor) Hiebert, Kroeker, or Toews. Some of this old attitude was reflected in the question that some students asked me at Fresno

Pacific: “What do you want us to call you? Doctor, or Professor, or Mister Enns, or just ‘Bob’?” My response usually was that I did not really care what they called me, so they should address me in whatever way they felt comfortable, which became “Bob” with increasing frequency. So, not only was everything connected to everything in the old world, but some things were more “special” than others. There were hierarchies of respect and degrees of “holiness” to learn and adjust to. Compared with that, our new more secularized social world feels quite “flat.” More about “secularization” later.

ECONOMICS: HOW WE ORGANIZE OUR RESOURCES

There was no clear separation of either the family or the church from economic matters, even though few Mennonites have practiced “community of goods” like the Hutterites, who, like the Amish, are spiritual kin of the Mennonites. I know that there were partnerships and loans that happened between family members, especially on the Unruh side, where Grandpa helped and others cooperated in farming together with some of my uncles. Ruth and I, too, have made loans to family members. My father and his brother, it was said, were partners “in everything except their wives and kids and Uncle John’s airplane.” My first employers were all relatives of mine: my father and my uncle on their farms and in their business; my grandfather, who, for several years hired three or four of us cousins to help him “box” his raisins, which meant that we picked up paper or wooden trays covered with dried grapes and emptied them into large wooden “sweat” boxes on a trailer behind the tractor that grandpa Unruh usually drove (Cousins in **photo #4** are, left to right, Marvin, Bob, Earl).

My uncle Al Friesen hired me to help deliver furniture from his store in Reedley and, when we first arrived in Pasadena, my uncle Art hired me to help my cousin Roger pick up and deliver refrigerators all across the Los Angeles basin for uncle Art’s refrigerator repair business. Other relatives worked in the Enns family automobile business. My brother Harold and cousin Earl eventually succeeded their fathers, Jack and John, in ownership of Enns Pontiac, Buick and GMC in Reedley. I can remember my mother and her sisters taking us kids to my grandfather’s shed (where I once felt a black widow spider crawling on my neck) to help cut peaches for drying and to his vineyard to help pick his grapes and put them on trays to dry into raisins. Prior to our move to Santa Barbara after our marriage, my only employer who was not a relative (besides “Uncle Sam”) was Jack Brandt, close friends of my parents and later father-in-law of my sister. So economic and family arrangements were not isolated from one another. The extended family served as a bank, as an employment agency, and as a consulting firm, helping with farming and business decisions.

In the old Mennonite world, there were many ways in which church and economics were also linked. One of the striking buildings that we saw in the Mennonite town of Halbstadt in the Molotschna colony in Ukraine was the Mennonite credit union, a form of economic sharing within the church community that is carried on today in what was until recently known as the Mennonite Mutual Aid (now “Everence”) insurance program. Migrations within Russia, from Russia to North and South America, and from the mid-west to the Pacific states were commonly done with groups of relatives and fellow church members, sometimes, as entire congregations. Many of these migrations were motivated by a combination of religious, family, and economic considerations, though as far as I know religious motivations were almost entirely absent when Mennonites moved from the mid-west to California. That migration was almost entirely for economic reasons, though the moves were often coordinated with other church members and members of the extended family. More often than not migrants who came later chose to settle in or near communities that were already established by relatives and co-religionists.

Earlier in the history of the MBs in North America, purchasing commercial insurance was prohibited because relying on a secular insurance company demonstrated a lack of faith that God and the church community would provide. I remember presentations in our church in Reedley by Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) workers just after the end of WW II reporting on the plight of fellow Mennonites (and other refugees) in Europe who were in desperate situations because they had fled the Soviet Union only to become impoverished refugees in camps in The Netherlands and Germany, and I remember the generous contributions of raisins and money that would be sent to assist these suffering brothers and sisters in the faith. I remember announcements during the morning worship services in the Reedley MB church about farmers who were ill or widows who were unable to do the required work on their farms, with requests for volunteers to help take care of farm work such as pruning trees and vines--and I remember the willingness of fellow members to provide the needed assistance. In 1949 when the Reedley MB church decided to construct a new sanctuary, hiring a professional architect was something relatively new among the Mennonite Brethren, but expecting extensive lay participation in the actual work of construction was nothing new at all (reminiscent of the “barn-raisings” famously done by the Amish). The chair of the building committee and the “construction foreman” were both laymen and primarily farmers. Mr. Knaak also worked part-time as a carpenter. Other men of the congregation donated their labor as they were able. Christian faith and economic decisions were not independent of each other.

I knew that the practice of providing mutual aid for fellow Mennonites and others was important but I did not know much about the very long history that lay behind what I saw during my growing-up years. I will say more about this later, but when Holland gained independence from Spain in 1648, the Dutch Mennonites were allowed to openly practice their previously prohibited Anabaptist religion. When some became prosperous and influential in Dutch society, they created their own organizations for mutual aid, and they did not forget their spiritual kin who were suffering in poverty and were still being persecuted in Switzerland and elsewhere. As early as 1620 the Dutch Mennonites created a mutual aid organization that included the first fire insurance plan “in modern economic history.” And they offered aid to their Anabaptist brothers and sisters as they were able. For example, in 1709 the government of the City of Bern in Switzerland sentenced 57 Swiss Anabaptists into exile. The Bern officials contracted with a shipping company to transport the prisoners down the Rhine and then on into exile. When the Dutch Mennonites heard about this, they had enough financial resources and political influence to arrange for the Dutch government to free the exiles when the ship stopped in Holland. They helped some of these exiles emigrate to Pennsylvania. Things like this happened so often that in 1710 the Dutch Mennonites formally organized a “Committee for Foreign Needs” to provide financial and other assistance to their co-religionists who were suffering because of persecution, or famine, or for other reasons.

I have already mentioned the Mennonite Credit Union in Russian. Much later the Mennonite Central Committee was organized in 1920 in North America to assist Mennonites in Russia who were starving in the aftermath of WW I and the turmoil of the Russian revolution. Also during the 1920s, the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization helped some 22,000 Russian Mennonites travel to and resettle in Canada. And, then, near the end of WW II about 35,000 Russian Mennonites reached Germany ahead of the German Army as they retreated west from the advancing Russian Army. The Russians managed to capture some 23,000 of these escapees and sent them back to the *gulags* in Siberia but the MCC helped the other 12,000 find their way to North and South America. So I learned very early in my life that financial resources were not just for personal consumption. They were to be shared with people in need. Personal charity is an important part of this, of course, but organizing institutions to help meet the needs of people who are suffering is also one of the functions of the church, as it has been since the first deacons’ group was organized in the earliest history of the Christian church. (The word “deacon” is derived from *diakonia*, a Greek word for service.)

I saw this concern for mutual aid across the street from my childhood home. Directly across the street was a modest two-story house that served as an "Old People's Home" for elderly members of the Reedley MB church who could not care for themselves and whose families could not provide appropriate support. There was a resident couple who served as care providers for the residents. This was, for me, clear evidence that the church provided much more than just spiritual and emotional support for individuals and families. The church also provided very practical care and support for members of the church community and their families who could not care for themselves, and the members of the church who had the surplus economic resources to help support this kind of service were expected to do so. Only later did I learn that there is a long history among Mennonites of organizing programs and institutions of mutual care and support, both for people within and outside the church community.

My father sometimes expressed irritation that fellow MB church members would purchase cars and other consumer goods in Fresno because the price was a bit cheaper than what was available from the several automobile dealers who were members of local MB churches. His concern was not only that he and other local Reedley merchants lost some business. His problem was that the profits from the sales would be used by anonymous people in Fresno and would not be available to help support the work of the church and the local community. My father also mentioned that sometimes he would discourage a customer from purchasing a new or used car when he knew (People in a small community like Reedley knew a lot about each other's business!) the customer could not really afford it. In 2012 one of my friends confirmed that this was more than just apocryphal exaggeration when he told me that in about 1950 my father and two other Mennonite car dealers in Reedley had refused to sell him a new car because they did not think he could afford it. He finally found a non-Mennonite dealer who was willing to sell him the car—even though, he says, "Your dad was right. I could not really afford it." Contributing at least one tenth of one's income to the church was a widely held expectation, though this was never enforced in a legalistic way. In all of these, and in many other ways, it became clear to me that what one does with one's economic resources is not merely a matter of personal values and preferences. The use of money is also a matter of stewardship on behalf of the work of the Kingdom of God.

There was also a sense that how one earned one's living was inseparable from one's Christian faith. One should work at one's profession with a sense of "calling," as if work is an act of Christian service, the same as the service of a priest or monk. Grandpa Unruh provided a model of what this means. I

grew up understanding that during his youth Grandpa Unruh considered two options: farming and pastoral ministry. I am not sure of the details, but at one point he became convinced that God was "calling" him to work as a farmer. So, he said, he dedicated his life to farming, and he hoped to continue to work in this "calling" until he died--a wish that was fulfilled when he suffered a heart attack in the middle of a row while driving his tractor in his vineyard. My grandmother found him dead on his tractor where it came to a stop against a shed at the end of the row of grape vines. Work was not only for the purpose of acquiring material goods for personal or family consumption. Work was not even primarily for personal emotional satisfaction. Work was an expression of one's Christian commitments, whether that was in a "secular" calling like farming or business or in a "sacred" vocation in the service of the church.

Because they express very succinctly what I am trying to say here, and to indicate that there is a long history behind this attitude toward work, I will insert one short paragraph from a biography of Pilgram Marpeck, an important early (d. 1556) Anabaptist leader who throughout most of his adult life held high-ranking governmental positions as an engineer (Klaasen and Klassen, p. 308):

We may assume that Marpeck's professional work and his Christian leadership were guided by the same basic theological axiom—the humanity of Christ—with the resulting hallowing of material things as bridges to the divine. Thus we can suggest that he had a sacramental view of his professional work as well. His work was a direct expression of his faith. It was not simply a means to make a living and support his vocation as a Christian leader but an integrated part of his life.

There were several ways in which their churchly commitments had very concrete impacts on the economic decisions of my grandparents and many others. Many of my relatives and fellow church members shared the conviction that Sunday, the Christian equivalent of the Jewish Sabbath, was to be a day of rest, not work. These convictions were severely tested on occasions when rain was threatening while the dried grapes were ready to be picked up from their paper trays on the ground and "boxed" or "rolled" to keep the raisins dry. Rain on grapes while they are still on the trays can result in a rotted and spoiled crop. The question was whether it was OK to work on Sunday to save the crop from being rained on and spoiled on the ground. On the one hand, as Jesus said, it was permissible to rescue an ox that had fallen into a hole on the Sabbath, but, on the other hand, one should "keep the Sabbath holy" by not working at all and taking the economic consequences, whatever they might be. As far as I can recall, Grandpa Unruh always refused to work on Sundays, regardless of what might happen to his crops. And there was also the question of whether it was OK for MB farmers to sell their grapes to a

winery. Selling to a winery was usually a last resort since prices were generally low, but when there was no better market for one's crop, was it OK to sell to a winery? For a time it was possible to designate that one's grapes would be used only for the "Betsy Ross Grape Juice" that was also produced by a local winery and would not be used to make alcohol, but I think most farmers realized that the odds that the winery would actually pay attention to such requests and keep one batch of grapes separate from the others were remote in the extreme. In these and other ways it was clear that one's faith had implications for one's economic activities. They were not in separate compartments, isolated from one another.

One last recollection will illustrate another way in which family, economics, and religious values intersected. Many of us recall our mothers scolding us when we did not want to eat something that was part of our family meal. For me that was most vegetables other than corn and string beans. "Eat your (e.g. gray-green, squishy canned peas). Just think about the starving children in (e.g. India, Africa or China). They would be really happy to eat your (fill in the blank)." Of course we kids scoffed at the idea. "What are we supposed to do? Mail our (e.g. already cooked canned peas) to those starving kids? A lot of good that would do!" But I think the underlying lesson stayed with me: Our patterns of personal consumption do have implications for others in our global community and we understand more clearly now than ever that they impact our shared physical environment, too. For many years we found a kind of Mennonite pride in being part of a congregation in Fresno in which many members exhibited at least some degree of frugality in their personal and family lifestyles and respect for the environment in their patterns of consumption. It was great to see many economy cars in the church parking lot and we were happy to do our part in simple gestures toward responsible environmental stewardship such as washing dishes instead of using disposable paper or Styrofoam plates for church meals. We were pleased that because many members contributed their time, energy, and talents to the work of the church, staff support was comparatively low as a portion of the congregational budget, and, even then, the congregation made a commitment to gradually increase the portion of the annual budget that was used to support ministries and services beyond our own congregational needs. We found considerable satisfaction in being part of a congregation that contributed very generously to many good causes, both local and global, above and beyond contributions to our own congregational budget. For many (but not all) of us, responsible stewardship was an important part of our personal, familial, and congregational understanding of what the Christian life is all about.

Taking stewardship seriously was an important part of our spiritual heritage as Protestant and Anabaptist-Mennonite Christians. Like many other Protestants, Mennonites inherited an old tradition of convictions about work, money and the use of other resources that German sociologist Max Weber called “the Protestant Ethic.” It went something like this: “Work hard to earn all you can, be frugal to save all you can, be smart in investing all you can, in order to share all you can.” Of course it is easy to become ritualistic, or even obsessive, about work and finances so that work and frugality become ends in themselves, but the real point is to have resources to share with people who are in greater need than we are. Since ideas like this raise all kinds of practical questions and complications, most of us find it easier to just fit in with the attitude toward money that is dominant in our culture which generally assumes that “if you can afford it, of course it is OK to buy it.”

We have thought for a long time that we should all have some kind of community of discernment or an accountability group to help us be more honest and responsible in our decision-making about how we earn and spend our money and other resources than we are inclined to be on our own. But few of us like to have others interfere in what we consider to be our own private affairs, and this includes finances and a variety of other taboo topics that are “nobody’s business but my own.” Ruth was once famously quoted in a Mennonite publication as saying that we are so secretive about our personal finances that we know more about each other’s sex lives than we do about each other’s finances. She was making a case for more transparency and accountability in how we use our money and other resources, not that we Mennonites are gossips or voyeurs (though that might be true, too). I recently learned (from Robert Wuthnow) that very few Americans discuss their personal finances with friends and only a very small 3 or 4% of church members ever discuss personal finances with fellow members of their congregations. And even more recently I saw a report that many spouses never discuss financial matters. So for most Americans, personal finances are cloaked in a great shroud of secrecy.

Many Mennonites have talked a lot about living simply, but it is obvious even in the brief account that I gave of the owners of huge estates in Russia that not all Mennonites gave high priority to using their resources in the service of others. The Reimer estate, Klassen reported, gave a generous donation to the hospital in Orloff, but that came out of what remained *after* the construction of their 74 room mansion. Ruth’s grandfather left a different kind of example when he sold all or part of his farm in California to help finance his work in support of refugees who were coming out of Russia and in rescuing his orphaned relatives from very dire circumstances. The legacy of the Protestant ethic and the example of Mennonite forbears like Wilhelm Neufeld have together greatly influenced our own

thinking about what Christian stewardship really means. And, of course, growing up in families that had recently experienced the Great Depression also hugely impacted our own attitudes toward spending, and especially, borrowing money, which we have always felt should be avoided in all except the most special of circumstances. So I grew up just “knowing” that money matters were not in a separate sphere that was independent of family and faith. They were all woven together like threads in a cloth.

Of course this matter of Mennonite frugality can be carried to extremes. Ruth reports that when the family went into her grandmother Fast’s small house in Reedley after her death to dispose of her things, one drawer in grandma’s kitchen cabinet was labelled “Strings too short to use.” And that is what was in the drawer: short lengths of string. Not many of us are tempted to practice that extreme form of frugality these days, but many of us could take “Reduce, Repair, Re-use, Re-purpose, and Re-cycle” a bit more seriously than we do in our consumer society.

EDUCATION: OPENING (AND CLOSING) BOUNDARIES

Schools, too, were closely intertwined with family, church, and economic relationships. My father was a member of the Immanuel Academy board for many years, including when the decision was made to move from the old "Bible School" building located on the property of the Reedley MB church across the street from our home on K Street, to the end of Riverview Avenue (where uncle John’s family lived) to what had been a Church of God Campground. The new location was on a beautiful site overlooking the Kings River. Building materials from the old Church of God "Tabernacle" building that had been used for large group meetings were used to construct the first buildings for "Immanuel Academy" and the former camp dining hall served as both the chapel and dining hall during the years when I was a student at Immanuel. My cousins were my fellow students, and later my brother was a teacher, coach, and administrator at what became Immanuel High School, and, later, the more comprehensive Immanuel Schools. My father was part of the MB board that helped purchase the property for what eventually became Fresno Pacific University and the Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary and my brother was also a teacher, coach and administrator at what was then known as Pacific College, where I taught from 1970 to 2000. All three of our daughters attended Pacific and two of our grandchildren graduated from the school, as did the wife of one of our grandsons. School, family and church were intertwined.

Both Immanuel and Pacific were owned and operated by groups of MB churches. In the early years, board members of both of these schools were exclusively MB men, including many pastors. Almost all of my fellow students at Immanuel were members of, or connected to, MB churches and, with few

exceptions the early faculties at both Immanuel and Pacific were also fellow Mennonite Brethren. Immanuel musical groups presented concerts primarily in MB churches. This included choir and other musical groups. Ruth, who was GC, not MB, but attended Immanuel anyhow, sang in the Immanuel girls' trio and I sang in the boys' quartet. I also played trombone in the school band and in a brass quartet. Ruth and I were both members of the choir. We traveled by bus or cars to perform in MB churches in other parts of California.

During the time that I was at Immanuel the school did not have a gym, so all of our sports events (intramurals, mostly) took place out of doors, on dirt basketball courts, softball diamonds, and venues for track and field events. Since athletic competition with public schools was deemed too "worldly" for us, we did not compete with local high school teams, except for one scrimmage with the Reedley High School varsity basketball team one afternoon when they needed a workout while waiting for their league playoff game. We were very happy that they were ahead of us by only a few points at the end of three quarters when league rules required that both teams finish the game with substitutes. Our team also drove in cars to the Los Angeles area for an annual "basketball trip" to play against Christian high school teams in the area. Competing with other Christian schools seemed to be OK.

The close linkage between church and school also became evident when Immanuel English teacher Malinda Penner (later Nikkel) prepared a group of us students to do a public presentation of the drama *The Hoosier Schoolmaster*. Shortly before our scheduled performance, the Immanuel board decided that it would not be appropriate for the school to present a play that did not have an explicit Christian message, so the performance was cancelled. Even at Pacific I remember a meeting where we discussed whether it would be appropriate to have real wine bottles on the table during a theater production since this might offend some of the churchly sensitivities. We decided the wine bottles would be OK since it was just a play--but tensions over the boundaries around "academic freedom" and church accountability were always very much present. MB schools were extensions of the church, though the relationship between church and college was also dialogical and sometimes contentious. I remember a meeting of the MB Pacific District Conference (which owned the College) where a Pacific biology professor was asked to explain to the delegates what he was teaching about the controversial issue of "evolution." This was a learning experience that went both ways.

As was true of other educational institutions, Mennonite high schools and colleges could reasonably be expected to provide the primary contexts in which young people would meet their marriage partners, contributing thereby to the likelihood of marriages of spouses who shared a common cultural and faith

heritage. (The sociological term for marriage within a group is “endogamy.”) Our 1953 graduating class from Immanuel was not only representative of this matchmaking function of schools, but it was extreme. There were 10 marriages between classmates in our graduating class of 53 students. That is, 20 of us (including Ruth who attended Immanuel as a freshman, sophomore, and junior but graduated from Reedley High School) married Immanuel classmates. I wonder if more than one third of a graduating class marrying each other might be a world's record. As far as I know, only one of these 10 couples divorced (which is not to say that it might have been better if others had, but I do not know enough to make judgments about that.).

Perhaps it is because I did not attend Tabor College (the small MB college in Hillsboro, Kansas) myself and am, therefore, an “outsider” to all of this, but I have been amazed to observe how deep and enduring friendships that began at Tabor College continue to be even more than fifty years later. Alumni gather from around the country, and the world, to celebrate anniversaries of graduations and it is quite evident (especially to an outsider) that the bonds of friendship remain strong in spite of the passage of a lot of time. Surely this is not just because of the Tabor experience itself, but because of the shared history, faith and culture that came together in the school experience. It has also been interesting to hear anecdotal reports, though I have seen no statistical evidence of this, that few of the children and grandchildren of my friends who are Tabor alums have chosen to carry on the tradition of studying at Tabor, or any of the Mennonite Colleges, for that matter. Many members of the next generations choose to receive their higher educations in the most elite universities into which they can manage to gain admission. The old world ethnic and religious connections that brought many of the people in my generation and the next to “our schools” are no longer strong enough to attract very many members of the younger generations to places like Tabor or Fresno Pacific.

Schools have provided the primary context for my life-long enjoyment of athletics. My first recollection of competitive sports is from the fifth or sixth grade when Coach Luke Trimble taught us to do the “standing broad jump.” Think “The Jumping Frogs of Calaveras County.” I found out that I could jump farther than almost any of my little classmates. In junior high school we started real athletic events, though they bear little resemblance to how games are played these days. I still remember Coach Trimble’s by now totally anachronistic explanation that “Basketball is a non-contact sport.” I soon learned that I could run the hurdles faster than almost anyone my age and size in Fresno County, and I could throw (put) the little eight-pound shot pretty far, too. During Immanuel days, some of us participated in almost everything--football, basketball, softball, track, and even a little bit of tumbling

(which I hated because I lacked the required coordination). I was a forward on the basketball team (though we received little or no coaching so we learned very little about the fundamentals), pitched and played various other positions for the softball team, threw the discus, put the shot and sprinted in track. My cousin Earl and I held the Immanuel school record in the 100-yard dash for a while, running on a track that I remember as being recently plowed. During the summers some of us Immanuel classmates played softball in a "church league" in Reedley.

My greatest claim to athletic notoriety happened in an intramural "flags" football game during my junior year at Immanuel, with most of the student body lined up along the sidelines watching. I was playing half-back in a "T-Formation," which was about all we knew in those days. While I was trying to run through the line, someone grabbed my flag—and, at the same time, the string holding up my sweat pants, so before I knew what was happening, my sweat pants were down around my knees. Physical education teacher Nick Siemens said it was the first time he had ever seen anyone blush on all four cheeks at the same time.

I took the same attitude toward participating in athletics and everything else at the same time that I had at Immanuel to Reedley College. So while I was playing in the marching band, singing in the choir and men's chorus, taking a full load of college classes, participating in Inter Varsity Christian Fellowship activities, working part time at Enns Pontiac, helping at the Selma Chapel, and trying to figure out what to do with my high school romance, I also joined the Reedley College basketball team—for which I was not at all prepared by my Immanuel experiences playing out on a dirt court and with minimal coaching. So my collegiate basketball career did not last very long, nor did my participation in the marching band, because both were just too time consuming. When the track coach saw me do the shot put in a P.E. class one day, he encouraged me to join the Reedley College track team, so I did, since I could pretty much control my own practice schedule. I started with the shot put (I could "put" the 16 pound shot about 40 feet on a good day) and discus (I reached 142 feet in practice one day.), but there was not much of a future for a 6' 3" shot putter who weighed less than 170 pounds. At least not without special nutrition and strength programs (We had neither.) and some good coaching (not much of that, either). But then, when I ran a leg on a relay team as a substitute and found out I could keep up with guys who thought they were sprinters, I added the 100 and 220 yard dashes to my track repertoire. I have a third place medal in the 220 yard dash from our Conference track meet my freshman year.

During my sophomore year I discovered that I could keep up with most everyone in the 220 yard low hurdles, so that became my main event. For a while I held the record at Reedley College (24.5 seconds,

broken a few years later by my little brother Harold). I placed second in the Conference meet because I was very slow out of my starting blocks. To this day I am sure that the other guys jumped the gun, but the starter did not call us back. Still, second was good enough to qualify for the Northern California Regional qualifying meet where I placed third, and then I placed sixth in the California State Junior College finals at the large California Relays track meet in Modesto in 1955. I would rather not mention that the guys who placed fourth in the Northern and Southern state qualifying meets did not bother to show up for the state meet in Modesto so there were only six of us in the final race. But that is what happened. (See **photo #5** re. Reedley College track days.) While in the army in Korea, I played a little bit of softball and basketball and threw the javelin just far enough to get some time off to go to a track meet in Seoul, but that was the end of serious athletics for me, since I was married and had a family to support during my days at UCSB and after. Since then it has been mostly pick-up basketball games (including a one-on-one game in Pasadena with my cousin Roger when I tore ligaments in my left foot, leaving me with a problem for the rest of my life), "jungle" volleyball games, some table tennis now and then, etc. By now we have been reduced to being spectators, mostly on T.V.

POLITICS: WHO IS IN CHARGE HERE?

Unlike their religious counterparts in other countries like The Netherlands, Canada, and, especially, in Paraguay, where Mennonites have served as legislators, mayors, and, even, cabinet ministers, few American Mennonites from Russia have been elected to higher political offices. Reedley MBs were not an exception to this generalization. Several Mennonites (including Ruth's father) served as members of the local board of education, a few Mennonites were members of the city council and MB physician Menno Gaede, and more recently, Mary Fast (whose husband, Brad, worked at Enns Pontiac), served as mayors of Reedley, but I am aware of no member of my extended family who was elected to any political office at any level. I remember hearing conversations at family gatherings about local political issues such as the election of the superintendent of schools (T. R. Nickel, an MB, who came to the Reedley district from Visalia). Perhaps there was not that much to talk about since support for the Republican Party was very widespread in MB circles, including most relatives on both sides of my extended family. The fact that members of the MB church voted at all represented a substantial change from earlier in the history of the denomination when members were prohibited from belonging to a political party or even voting.

There is a lot of research that indicates that in recent years priorities in relationships between religion and politics have shifted. Instead of the church shaping the political attitudes and behavior of its

members, for many people it is now the other way around. In our highly polarized political environment, many people are more inclined to select churches that are compatible with their political views than to allow their religious convictions and affiliations to shape their political thoughts and actions. Many young people first identify with a political party and only later choose to affiliate with a religious community, and there is a strong tendency for Americans to stick with their political party throughout their lifetimes. People are more inclined to change their religious ideas and practices than to change political parties. The result is that most of us Americans now reside in “silos,” or “echo chambers” in which our political inclinations, whether “conservative” or “progressive,” are repeated and reinforced by the folks with which we surround ourselves. In the U.S. the white evangelical subculture, of which most MBs are a part, is currently so solidly identified with the Trump wing of the Republican Party that 81% of white evangelicals voted for and continued to support Donald Trump as President, in spite of his many obvious character faults and inhumane policy positions. This puzzling phenomenon has given rise to a whole cottage industry of scholarly attempts to explain the apparent incongruities. I will say much more about this in a long digression later in these memoirs.

RECREATION: WHO ARE OUR PLAYMATES?

Church and family also overlapped in providing entertainment and recreation activities. The Reedley MB church held an annual "Sunday School Picnic" at the Mooney's Grove Park just south of Visalia, where we could paddle row boats on a small (and dirty) pond, marvel at the peacocks that roamed freely in the park, and compete in age-appropriate games such as three-legged and gunny sack races and softball games between fathers and sons. Women mostly took care of the food and watched the kids and men play. Another annual event that had already been practiced in Russia was the *zaengerfest*, a music festival that attracted choirs and other musical groups plus congregants from many of the MB churches in California, often to the cavernous (or so it seemed to me at the time) Memorial Auditorium in Fresno. The program featured presentations by a variety of choirs and other vocal and instrumental groups representing the various churches in attendance. I once played my trombone in front of this “huge” crowd as a member of a brass octet. This also provided us with an opportunity to at least meet fellow MB young people from other congregations--and, if we were lucky enough to get away, to stroll together, often in small groups or as couples, along the streets of the big city of Fresno.

Attendance at the MB Hartland Bible Camp in the nearby Sierras also provided a context for being further socialized into the MB religious and cultural ethos. Like the *zaengerfest*, Hartland attracted fellow MBs from other congregations near and far, so we could become at least a little bit connected

with MB young people from other small towns and even from big cities like Fresno, Bakersfield, and San Jose. The program consisted of sermons, recreation (games, rowing boats on the small pond, and hikes), crafts, music (mostly Christian), chores, more sermons, and, of course, nighttime pranks that were mostly harmless. Later a swimming pool was constructed. Initially there was a consensus that coed swimming would not be appropriate for Christians. Even though the genders used the pool at different times, girls and women were required to wear modest one-piece bathing suits, and even these had to be covered, for a time, with a “T” shirt. Every effort was made to keep the boys away from the pool while the girls were using it. Maintaining clear boundaries between the sexes was important in our old world.

In about 1946 Ruth’s parents purchased an old mountain cabin on Millwood Creek near Pinehurst about 40 miles east of Fresno that was part of a corporation called The Cedars. The 13 family cabins in The Cedars are just above another group of 12 cabins in the Cedarbrook colony that also stretches along the creek. Ownership patterns of these two groups of family cabins provide additional insight into the nature of relationships in Reedley in the early 20th century. Cedarbrook was incorporated in 1919. *All* of the people originally involved in Cedarbrook were fellow members, or closely related to family members, of the First Mennonite Church in Reedley, where Ruth and her family were long-time members. Their intention was to provide a place for their families to escape from the summer heat in the San Joaquin Valley, but they also thought their cabins might become a “resort” that might be a profitable business venture, plus the mountain air was thought to be good for people who were suffering from tuberculosis, so it was also used as a kind of TB sanitarium. The Cedars, farther up the creek, was incorporated two years after Cedarbrook, in 1921. *None* of the owners of the cabins in The Cedars were Mennonites—but they all had Reedley connections and relationships with the Mennonites down in Cedarbrook. Many lived along West Avenue in Reedley where some of the “successful” members of the First Mennonite Church were their close neighbors. Some were also business associates or served on boards (e.g. school district, city council) together. Several of the cabins in The Cedars have been purchased by people with Mennonite connections (Ruth’s parents were the first.), so the old boundaries have broken down somewhat, but arrangements in these mountain communities illustrate, again, the overlapping and permeable boundaries between family, recreation, church, business, residence, etc.—and even medical care. Relationships were “thick” in that old world (**photos #45 and 46**).

When I think about the kinds of play in which I engaged during my childhood, I think first about things that I did with neighbors and cousins. Of course we did not have TV to watch and none of us could have even imagined fantastic things like the smart phones and other “devices,” or the computer games that are ubiquitous these days. In fact, we did not even have swimming pools to play in. There were only two private swimming pools in our large circle of acquaintances, one (Heppner’s) near Orange Cove and another (Braun’s) south of Dinuba, and even these were basically receptacles for pumped irrigation water, not the kinds of residential back yard swimming pools that now dot the suburban landscape. We sometimes swam in the crowded municipal pool in Reedley, when it was not closed for lessons or some other reason. We could sometimes swim in the irrigation ditches and canals when they were seasonally filled with water, but our parents discouraged this because there were reports that one could contract dreaded polio by swimming in the water in the ditches and canals. No one really knew what caused polio, so that was a scary thought. The nearby Kings River might have provided a good location for recreation, but the water was cold, the currents were swift and tricky, and there were numerous drownings during many summers, so we did not often swim there. Even fishing in the river seemed to be too close to danger. So we were pretty much on our own to invent our own forms of play, sometimes alone but often with others.

Some of the first incidents that come to mind when I think about play during my childhood were not only social, with relatives and neighbors, but they were also so destructive that they merited special spankings from my father. That is probably why I remember them. Several such episodes stand out in my memory. When we were still living in town, we had a small orange tree in our back yard. As I recall, it must have been about seven or eight feet tall and about ten feet in diameter—perfect for little boys to chase each other around. One day as neighbor boy Arthur (who was a few years older than I so I could partially blame him) and I chased each other around the tree, we enhanced the fun by picking the small green oranges from the tree and throwing them at each other as we ran round and round, until there were only a few oranges left on the tree. When my mother discovered the little green oranges scattered all around the yard, all she had to say was: “We will wait until dad gets home.”

I remember two other even more malevolent incidents that involved the participation of my cousins. During an “outing” at Grandpa Unruh’s house, while our moms sat inside talking, some of us cousins decided to have a contest to see who could throw the fresh eggs we found in Grandpa’s tank house the highest against the outside back wall (where our moms could not see us) of the two-story tank house. The eggs were a perfect size and shape for throwing. I do not think we succeeded in throwing the eggs

very high, but the level of parental wrath did reach a high enough level that this, too, merited “We will wait until dad gets home.” And then there was one other incident the motivation for which baffles me to this day—jealousy, probably. My double cousin, Don Enns, was the oldest of us Unruh grandkids. He was three or four years older than the three of us in the next tier of cousins, so he had skills that we did not yet possess. One afternoon as we arrived at Uncle John and Aunt Susan’s house for some kind of family gathering, I found my cousins Earl and Marvin Jr already out in the garage busily dismantling a wooden, red fire truck (or was it a race car?) that Don had creatively and painstakingly constructed—complete with a steering mechanism (think “soapbox derby”). As I recall, we not only took the fire truck all apart, but we even sawed and chopped up the wood Don had used in building it in the first place. That malicious deed more than merited the long wait and the well-deserved spanking when my dad came home.

One Halloween night during my high school years, a carload of us friends came very close to causing some serious damage. As we drove through the countryside looking for mailboxes against which we could toss the watermelons we had picked up from an abandoned patch, we came upon a tractor parked out in an open field. The farmer had very unwisely (especially on Halloween night!) left the keys in the ignition. We started the engine and we were sorely tempted to put the tractor in gear and let it drive off into the night, destination unknown. We could only imagine how surprised the farmer would be when he found his tractor missing the next morning. But when we realized that a driverless tractor could do some serious damage before it came to a stop who-knows-where, cooler heads prevailed. So we left the tractor in place with the engine running. We decided that finding the gas tank of his tractor mysteriously empty would be enough of a surprise for the careless farmer.

So a lot of the childhood play that I remember was social, involving mostly siblings, cousins and friends. That included many hours of playing basketball with little brother Harold (and others, including my Schellenberg cousins who lived next door on Dinuba Avenue) using the hoop attached to the big barn on our farm yard. Sometimes we would climb up on and walk across the wooden support structure inside the barn, or even run around up on the roof of the barn—something that must have worried our moms a whole lot!

But not all of my early recreation was social. I played by myself, too. One of the great thrills of my life was when my parents gave me a red tricycle that had a very big (or so it seemed to seven year old me) front wheel. We still lived in town, so I could peddle around the block on the sidewalk really fast. I needed new entertainment when we moved to the farm, where there no sidewalks to ride my trike on.

One of my projects was to nail together some scraps of wood into somewhat resembled the shape of a small tractor that I used to move around the piles of recently plowed soft dirt in an orchard next to our house. A less benign game that I think I must have invented involved some of the many black widow spiders that lived in our barn. I would trap two of the spiders and place each in a one quart canning jar. I cut holes in the lid for air and fed the spiders flies that I was able to catch. Each spider soon built a web inside its jar. When the spiders had each matured and deposited their eggs in the white sacs that they produced for that purpose, I was ready for the big excitement. I removed the lids from the two jars and placed the openings against each other. The two protective mothers-to-be almost immediately attacked each other, thrashing violently about in the webs inside the two jars, biting each other, until one was dead. It was awesome—but not very nice.

People who study such things point out that childhood play often mimics adult roles and serves as a kind of “anticipatory socialization” into the roles the child will play as an adult, but it did not work out that way for me. I became neither a serious basketball player, nor a farmer, nor an arachnologist. I have no recollection of playing at being a college professor or a teacher of any kind, but I did continue to think that relationships with people were really important.

FRIENDSHIPS: WHO ARE OUR FRIENDS?

Relatives and fellow MBs also provided a primary context for friendships and other informal social relationships. During the three years that we were in Pasadena, my uncle Art was not only my employer for a time but we sometimes visited them in their home on Sunday evenings and on other occasions. On many Sunday afternoons my cousin Roger and I played basketball together on the playground of a local school. One evening when the three-cylinder, two stroke engine on our German DKW station wagon stopped on the outskirts of the L.A. basin during a trip home from Reedley, we called my cousin Roger to help us, not AAA or some other commercial towing company. During our years in Pasadena we also frequently socialized with Aunt Evangeline and her brother, Uncle Frank, cousins of Ruth's father who had been helped out of Russia by Ruth's grandfather, and Evangeline's husband, Dietrich Dyck, whose brother, John, was married to my father's aunt Katherine. John was a barber in Reedley after he and Katherine moved back “home” to Reedley from Southern California where they had been part of the First Presbyterian Church in Hollywood. They were considered to be somewhat on the “worldly” side since my dad's aunt Katherine had worked as a seamstress in the movie industry in Hollywood. They were also suspect because they had once been Presbyterians.

Of course we socialized with others, too, but our closest friends during our years at Fuller were fellow student George Wiens, and his wife, Dr. Ruth (Groh) Wiens, an MB couple from Ontario, Canada. There were no relatives and few fellow MBs in Santa Barbara during the years that we were there, but when fellow MB Dr. Abraham Friesen, whom we had never met previously, joined the history faculty at UCSB in 1967, we helped Abe, Gerry and infant Eric move into their apartment. And years later, when I resumed motorcycle riding, our riding partners were almost always fellow Mennonites and fellow members of our congregation such as Bill Braun, Ken Neufeld and Larry Dunn. (During a period when we all rode BMW bikes, I jokingly suggested that we organize as a club called “MBeamers.”) When Ruth rode along as a passenger on my motorcycle, we almost always rode in the company of Bill and Joyce Braun (pastor), John and Betty Bergey (Kerckhoff neighborhood), Bob and Barbara Buxman (MCC administrator), and others. When large groups of us rode together, it was often with fellow riders from Mennonite congregations in Fresno, Reedley or Dinuba. I do not think it ever occurred to me that I might join another riding group or club. Church, friendships and recreation were woven into a seamless cloth.

In my memories of working with my cousins for my grandfather Unruh, family, work and fun were not isolated from each other. I remember playing games and laughing at Grandpa’s jokes as part of the process of boxing raisins (**Photo #4**). Cousin Marvin Just Jr. remembers Grandpa poking fun at the small Ford tractor a neighbor had just purchased. That little tractor, Grandpa joked, didn’t have enough power to do anything more than lead a bull to a heifer. When a friend from Santa Barbara and I stopped by to visit Grandpa Unruh after meeting with Dr. G. W. Peters, President of the new MB Seminary in Fresno at the time, my humble farmer Grandfather’s comment was “Oh. You are really going from the eagle to the gopher.” We really enjoyed Grandpa’s sense of humor. In Ruth's family, the siblings decided to share ownership and maintenance of the mountain cabin they inherited from their parents, partly with the goal of continuing a joint project that might help sustain relationships within the family. So we gathered periodically to discuss conditions at the cabin, physical, economic, and social (e.g. finances, schedules and rules for use), and we met together up at the cabin, sometimes for relaxation and sometimes for work, but usually some combination of work and play (which included frequent "coffee breaks" for rest and refreshments). When our generation was no longer able to do our part to maintain the cabin, we agreed to sell our shares to several relatives of the next generation at a greatly discounted price. We were eager to keep the cabin in the family. Under such conditions, family, work, play, and even economics do not belong to separate categories.

PROXIMITY: OUT OF SIGHT, OUT OF MIND?

In addition to the various institutions of a social system, there are several other dimensions of society that are important in giving structure to patterns of relationships. Proximity is one. Proximity might not be absolutely necessary for things to hold together, but it surely helps. In the “old world” when mobility was still somewhat limited, most people lived their entire lives within a limited geographic area and remained in contact with pretty much the same people from the cradle to the grave. That was still somewhat true in the Mennonite world of my childhood. All five of the Unruh sisters lived almost their entire lives within fewer than 10 miles from their parents and from each other. When about 90 of us relatives gathered in Reedley for an Unruh family reunion sometime in the 1970s, our little family drove about 25 miles from Fresno to Reedley. Of these 90 people, only one cousin, who was in Seattle, and did not attend, lived farther from Reedley. My father's family was somewhat more dispersed. Refrigerator repair businessman Uncle Art and Aunt Ruby lived in Southern California (Altadena and Big Bear Lake) for most of their adult lives, as did musician uncle Richard who lived in Barstow for many years, though all three moved back to Reedley after their retirement. Aunt Sarah was married to chicken farmer/pastor John Schellenberg, so they lived in various communities across the country, until they also retired in Reedley. Aunt Margaret and Uncle Al lived in the Los Angeles and San Jose areas for a number of years, but they also lived and worked in Reedley for a good part of their lives, and they, too, retired there. Fourteen of my 18 Enns cousins have lived in the Reedley area for most of their adult lives. Of these many relatives who have remained in the Reedley area, about one half have continued to be active members in one of the local MB churches.

Ruth's family demonstrates a much different pattern of geographic dispersion and religious diversity. Ruth's father was the only one of the eight children of Wilhelm Neufeld to remain in the Reedley area for almost his entire adult life except for two years of study at the University of California, Davis. Most of the others left Reedley to attend U.C. Berkeley and never returned for any long periods of time. Only Ruth and two of her sisters and three of the 17 cousins in the next generation remained as part of the Mennonite church. As I mentioned earlier, four of Ruth's five siblings spent most of their adult lives in the Reedley area. Sister Freda lived in Watsonville, about two hours away, for most of her adult life but she moved to Sierra View Homes in Reedley late in 2014. None of Ruth's Neufeld or Fast cousins live in the Reedley area and none is related to a Mennonite church, as far as we know.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS (CLASS): UP (AND DOWN) THE LADDER

Another dimension of society that helped to hold the community together, it seems to me, is the fact that almost all of the local MBs were generally within the American middle class. There were a few somewhat more successful and wealthy Mennonite farmers and businessmen and there were also a few members who were basically day laborers, but, for the most part, the class pyramid was relatively flat, with just a few slightly above and a few somewhat below the middle of the great American middle class. The class differences were nothing like what they were in Russia, with the large estate holders at one end of the continuum and the landless at the other end.

I once asked an elderly, wealthy (and as foul-mouthed as he was good-hearted) Armenian neighbor in Fresno why it was that the Armenians had become so much more wealthy, famous and powerful than the Mennonites. After all, the Armenians, too, had experienced persecution and had left a country that was not that far from where the Mennonites had lived in Russia; they had arrived in the same part of California at roughly the same time as the Mennonites; and they were initially engaged mostly in the same kinds of farming and small business occupations as the Mennonites. I mentioned the names of the governor of California (Deukmejian), a world-renowned author (Saroyan), a super-wealthy financier (Kerkorian), and some of the most influential men in Fresno at the time (Peters, Kashian), all of whom were Armenian. I could think of no Mennonites who had achieved similar levels of "success." "Oh" he said, "That is because you Mennonites are too God-damned honest. You never really get anywhere unless you are willing to lie and cheat and take advantage of people." For whatever reasons, most of the people in our Mennonite communities shared in common many of the attitudes and lifestyles that are typical of the American middle class.

Finally, it was interesting (to me, at least) to recall that during the early years of our residence in Fresno we received many personal and professional services from fellow Mennonites. Our family physician and dentist were Mennonites, as were the attorney and realtors to whom we looked for assistance. My barber was a fellow Mennonite. All of the persons who worked for Ruth when she was remodeling houses were Mennonites and some were relatives. When it was convenient, we took our cars to Enns Pontiac in Reedley for service and repairs. For many years our social and professional relationships were mostly with "our people."

So I grew up among the remnants of an "old world" in which the institutions of society were still interrelated in ways that are much less common today. As I said, Peter Berger used the metaphor of the "sacred canopy" to make the case that religious beliefs and practices helped in a unique way to hold

things together. Everything was connected to everything, and if there was a “center” to the whole, it was religion. But it is important to keep in mind that many things were constantly changing, even then. What I have tried to provide here is like a snapshot that is just one frame in a moving picture. Later I will describe and try to explain some of the social changes that I have witnessed and experienced.

MENNONITE CULTURE: HOLDING IT ALL TOGETHER.

To return to my “organic analogy” (“A social system is like a body.”), just as there is more to a healthy organism than simply several organs that are mutually interdependent, so it takes more to hold a community together than just a series of interrelated social institutions such as family, church, school, economics and politics. It takes more than just proximity and a shared position in the class structure. I think “culture” is like the nervous system that enables coordination and cooperation between the various organs in a body. Or, to change the metaphor, a shared culture can serve as a powerful “glue” that holds the social institutions of a community together. Of course the several components of culture can lead to conflicts within a community, too.

Sometimes the word “culture” is used to refer to the “high” arts, like going to the opera or ballet, or having a lot of French words in one’s vocabulary. But by culture I am referring to the patterns of thought and expected behavior that members of a community share in common. My favorite definition of culture is that it is the part of the environment that is constructed by humans. So the notion of culture includes the language that provides the shared conceptual categories into which we divide our environment and the primary means by which we communicate with one another; the patterns of thought that we use to make sense of the world in and around us; the expected behavior that we attach to persons in various kinds of statuses; and the values that we use to assign priorities to what is going on in and around us. Culture includes the sets of ideas that we use to make sense of our lives—including the understandings of the meaning of culture and other notions that I am using in these memoirs.

There is a material component of culture, too, that includes all of the technologies and material products that we use in our everyday lives, from our food, clothes and shelter to highways, irrigation systems and the internet. Cultures are learned. They are not transmitted automatically in our DNA. We pass our cultures on from generation to generation through teaching and modeling, so there is nothing automatic or inevitable about the cultures that we construct and transmit. Cultures change. I will briefly

describe some of the components of the Mennonite culture that helped to hold our social institutions together and give shape to my life.

SHARED HISTORY: A SHARED STORY MAKES US WHO WE ARE

I will begin with the suggestion that has been made by Robert Bellah and others that there is nothing more important to community cohesion than a sense of shared history. It is the feeling that they share the same story of where they came from and how they came to be the way they are that holds people together in community. Mennonite sociologist Donald Kraybill has even suggested that a shared historical memory is the one thing that Anabaptist-Mennonite people hold in common. After all, people who belong to Mennonite churches in places as diverse as Congo, India, Japan, Kansas, and California do not share much in common. Languages, foods, music, clothing styles, family patterns and even theological convictions differ from place to place but it is the sense of a shared history as a particular people of God that binds Mennonites together in organizations like the Mennonite World Conference (MCC) and the International Community of Mennonite Brethren (ICOMB). I have already given a brief account of my version of our Mennonite story and I will have more to say about that later.

THEOLOGY: WHAT WE BELIEVE TOGETHER

Of course there are many more components of a culture than just shared memories of our historical past. The MB church provided a set of theological ideas (one component of our culture) that helped to hold the community together. As I will explain in much greater detail later, the theology that we shared in Reedley was more strongly shaped by the pious and fundamentalist components of the mixture of theological traditions of which MB theology was constructed than by the Anabaptist elements that were part of the MB movement at the time of its origins in Russia in 1860. At least I learned almost nothing about Anabaptist history or theology in either the Christian education curriculum taught in the Reedley MB Church or at Immanuel. What I did learn was that we Mennonites are pretty much like Baptists, except that some of us believe in pacifism; we share a common ethnic background; and we support the benevolent work of the MCC.

LANGUAGE: *ADAM, WO BIST DU?*

We MBs shared a variety of other patterns of "culture" besides just historical memories and religious beliefs and practices. The German language was a part of our cultural heritage, even though most of the little German that I do know I learned in classrooms at Immanuel and UCSB, but not at home. I do not remember church services being conducted entirely in German, but I do remember that when I

was a child German was still used during part of the Sunday morning worship services in the Reedley MB church, especially during prayer time. Some of the older "brethren" (women were, for the most part, silent in the church) felt more comfortable praying in German than English. We joked that our grandparents were convinced that God speaks German because they read in their Bible that when God called out to Adam in the Garden of Eden, God clearly said *Adam, wo bist du?* (Adam, where are you?) I think now that my grandparents never really thought that, but it is just a kind of "Mennonite legend" since I have seen and heard references to it in other accounts of Mennonite life. But this does reflect the reality that Mennonites from Russia once found it difficult to separate their Christian faith from their German culture. That is one reason that in many Mennonite communities, including Reedley, in the early years after their arrival from the "old country" the churches sponsored part-time "Bible Schools" where the German language was taught and used. "High" German was the language of church and school while "Low" German was the language of the home and the street.

We learned neither dialect of German in our home, because when I was a child anything German was despised in the larger community since Germany was our "enemy" during both World Wars. My parents did occasionally use German at home in exchanging "secrets" in front of us kids. They explained later that they thought they were doing us a favor by not teaching us German because they had started school not knowing English and were thus greatly disadvantaged both socially and academically. They did not want us to face the same problems, especially because of the prejudice against anything German during the Second World War. My father reported that there were isolated instances where he felt himself to be the victim of discriminatory behavior, primarily on two accounts: first, because he was "German," and, second, he was called a "yellow-bellied traitor" because he was a pacifist. But this might have also been because his competitors were just trying to steal some business from him.

Most of my fellow students at Immanuel spoke about as little German as I did, though the few of us whose parents were recent immigrants still spoke the language in their homes. But, for some reason, we thought it was fun to use the German language as one of the ways to cheer for our teams during our intra-mural games:

Was ist dies,

Was ist das,

Das ist unsere schule,

Das ist was.

What is this?

What is that?

That is our school!

That is what.

Or something like that. I have no idea what we were thinking at the time, but in retrospect, I think we were enjoying this way of re-affirming our common ethnic identity while we were at the same time poking fun at it.

More seriously and more recently, in both the Reedley and Clovis MB churches, when words were available in both languages, we would occasionally sing one verse of a hymn in German. This seemed like a fairly harmless way of celebrating our shared ethno-religious heritage, though my father already thought many years ago that using German in the church was a mistake because it made non-German speaking newcomers feel like “outsiders.” As continuity with our cultural past becomes more remote and as congregations become more culturally diverse, these practices, too, inevitably faded away. As fewer and fewer people feel nostalgic about singing *Gott ist die liebe* instead of “God is love,” or *Stille Nacht* instead of “Silent Night,” this form of cultural “glue” inexorably ceases to function as a means to hold us together. This, of course, raises the question that is both explicit and implicit throughout these recollections and reflections: As the social structures change and the cultural practices that we inherited from the old world fade away, what takes their place?

BOUNDARIES: WHO IS “WE” AND WHO IS “THEY”?

Language, whether German, English, or any other language, powerfully shapes how we think and act because language provides the concepts and categories that we use in our perceptions of the “realities” in which we live. The concepts and categories that are given in our language usually provide us with clear boundaries and they are often arranged hierarchically. For example, “male” and “female” are categories with boundaries between them that are (presumably) clear and there are behavioral expectations attached to each category. Or at least that used to be the case. In the creation story in Genesis, we were taught, God created Adam and Eve “male and female,” so the boundaries between the genders should be kept very clear. According to regulations in the Old Testament, women should not act or even dress or cut their hair like men, and men should not act or dress like women. In the Mennonite world of my childhood, too, it seemed “natural” that men should have shorter hair and women longer hair. Also in the creation account, Eve was to be a “helpmate” to Adam, so males should be in charge and sexual relationships are permissible only between a man and a woman who are married to each other for life, or at least “until death do us part.” Since “deviants” such as hermaphrodites and homosexuals do not conform to these categories and expectations, and transgender persons openly change them, it was easy to think that they were sinful. And since “helpmate” implied hierarchy as well as difference, it also seemed to be natural that men should make the important decisions both

inside and outside the home, especially in the church where women should remain silent and keep their heads covered--as most older women (including my grandmothers) in the Reedley MB church still did when I was a child, during church activities at least. Of course sometimes these "head-coverings" were actually quite fashionable women's hats! Today in the Reedley MB Church men and women no longer wear head coverings or sit in separate sections in the sanctuary, but women still do not serve in pastoral leadership except in children's and women's ministries and, until recently, they were not permitted to serve communion. Gender categories do provide solid foundations for personal identity as was clear when my mother reportedly said, as she recovered from the anesthetic used in her hysterectomy, that she no longer even felt like a person. But they can also provide a foundation for sexist prejudices and discriminatory practices, and, recent scholarship has discovered that the gender categories and rules in the Bible did not really mean in their time what we have taken them to mean in ours. There are many texts in both the Old and New Testaments that point toward patterns of gender equity that were even more radical in their context than they are now in ours.

Racial categories also provided us with clear boundaries. In church we sang "Red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in His sight. Jesus loves the little children of the world." but we also grew up simply "knowing" that there was a "sundown law" (though we did not call it that) in Reedley that prohibited any black person from being inside the city limits after sunset, and that is why, unlike in neighboring small towns such as Kingsburg, Dinuba and Selma, there were no black families living in Reedley. It was not until I was a student in Reedley College that I learned that there was in fact no such law in Reedley, nor could there have been at that time. Even in nearby towns like Selma where there were African-American residents, senior citizens can still remember when it was simply understood and expected that whenever there was a line, whites came first, then Hispanics, and African-Americans came last. My parents mildly discouraged my friendship with the Korean and Japanese ancestry children with whom I liked to associate as friends, and I was told, though I never heard this directly, that my Unruh grandparents were great supporters of "foreign" missions programs but they were not so sure that "home" mission programs were such a good idea because this might lead to racially mixed marriages, which would mean being "unequally yoked together" across racial boundaries, as has in fact happened frequently in our larger family and church communities.

Other boundaries defined who was "in" as part of "us," and who the "outsiders" were. There were the ethnic boundaries that defined "us" as those with whom we shared a common history of migration from Russia and a common ethnic language (German). We shared other components of a common culture,

including familiarity with traditional Russian Mennonite foods such as *zweibach*, *verenika*, and *pluma mouse*. We shared a common faith. We had our own particular mixture of fundamentalism and a few selected emphases, like pacifism, from our Anabaptist religious heritage.

There were many gradients of "outsiders." The *Englishe* were the English speakers with whom we shared neither history, ancestral language, culture, nor faith, though we were at one with them as American citizens and many were at least fellow Protestants. People of other racial or ethnic groups (including Armenians, the Finnish people who lived down by the Kings River, and the Japanese and Filipino men who traveled along with the crops and picked grapes for Grandpa Unruh) seemed beyond a boundary that defined close friendships and intermarriage across these boundaries as being "unequally yoked." Very few members of the Reedley MB church were not also members of our own Russian Mennonite "people" (the Greek word is *ethnos*, from which we derive the terms ethnicity and ethnocentrism). In these and other ways we shared the ethnocentric and racist attitudes of the society around us, as revealed in the "restrictive covenant" that came with the legal documents when we purchased our house on Kerckhoff Ave. in Fresno, prohibiting the sale of properties in the area to people who were black, Hispanic, Japanese, Chinese, or from the "Ottoman Empire" (Armenians, Turks, etc.). Some parts of the culture of the "old world" were best left behind.

There were also religious boundaries but they were more difficult to define clearly. I have already indicated that it was easier to feel spiritual kinship with other "fundamental" Christians than with some of the non-MB Mennonites from Russia who might be tainted with "modernism." I think I developed in my own mind an image of a series of concentric circles, with our local Reedley MBs at the center, or to change the metaphor, at the top of a pyramid. The MB church in nearby Dinuba and the Zion Church (part of the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren denomination at the time) out in the country between Dinuba and Kingsburg suffered from a variety of minor deficiencies and did not quite measure up to our high standards. I did not learn until much later that the Dinuba MB Church was the result of a split within the Reedley congregation over how to relate to Amy Semple McPherson, a popular and charismatic woman preacher, and Pentecostalism more generally (Reedley people were more open to this.), but I did have the impression as a child that the people in Dinuba were unnecessarily traditional and conservative while we in Reedley were more cool (though we did not use that word then). Baptists came next in the hierarchy, since for the most part they shared our conservative theology and baptized correctly, by immersion, as we did, but for some reason the Baptists did not share our pacifist convictions. Nazarenes were pretty close, too, though they tended to let their emotions get carried

away sometimes, and the other Pentecostal and charismatic communities were even greater offenders when it came to emotionalism.

The "mainline" denominations, like Lutherans, Presbyterians and Methodists were more difficult to categorize since there were some good evangelical people in these communities, but overall they made the error of baptizing infants and they did not try hard enough to maintain theological "purity" within their ranks, since they, like the General Conference Mennonites, were willing to tolerate some "liberals" and "modernists" in their midst. All of these mainline denominations (and the GC Mennonites) also used a catechism to prepare people for baptism, raising questions about whether their members had really been "born again," and they baptized by sprinkling, a form of baptism that we were sure was inferior to the immersion that MBs (but not other Mennonites) insisted on. But all of these groups were at least still within the boundaries of the "Christian" category, unlike Roman Catholics who, we thought, believed in salvation by works, tolerated superstition, practiced idolatry in their "worship" of Mary and their statues of saints, and the Catholics thought that saints, priests, and the Pope served as "mediators" of relationships with God. Fellow "Christians" might be in need of correction, but the Roman Catholics and adherents of all other non-Christian faiths were in need of *conversion*. Or at least it seemed to me during my childhood and youth that there was a religious hierarchy something like this. Some of my students at Pacific seemed to share a version of this way of thinking when they would say things like "My family used to be Catholic but now we are Christians."

One way that I think of my own spiritual pilgrimage is as a process of loosening and redefining these clearly bounded and ranked cultural and religious categories. I have learned a lot about the value of religious and cultural diversity and interreligious and ecumenical dialogue across the many rigidly bounded categories with which I grew up.

PACIFISM: CONFLICTS OVER PEACE

"Pacifism" is such a central component of the Mennonite theological and cultural heritage that it accounts, in part, for many of the major Mennonite migrations. Mennonites migrated from Poland to south Russia during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries because the Prussian government was pressuring Mennonites and other minority communities to conform to the requirements of the central state, including conscription into the military. Our ancestors moved from Poland to Russia because of a series of "privileges" that were guaranteed to them by the Russian Czarina, Katherine the Great (who was German), including exemption from service in the Russian military. Mennonites left Russia for North America partly in response to threats of the "Russification" programs of the Russian government,

which included giving up the use of the German language in Mennonite schools and learning to speak Russian instead, and the end of exemptions from military service. As I said, my Unruh relatives were part of the first such mass migration when some 18,000 Mennonites moved from Russia to the American and Canadian mid-west in the 1870s. My Enns ancestors followed a bit later, in the 1880s.

The departure from Russia of Ruth's grandfather, Wilhelm Neufeld, with his family in 1910 came as a shock to the Mennonite community because he was an important leader among the Mennonites in Russia. Wilhelm Neufeld left for the United States because he thought that exemptions from military service for his five sons were more likely in the U.S. than in Russia. It is ironic that almost none of Wilhelm Neufeld's descendants carried with them his deeply held Mennonite convictions. Ruth's uncle Bill, for example, was a Harvard professor (physical education) and coach who became a high-ranking officer in the U.S. Navy during WW II and, later, an official with the U.S. Department of State, serving in various countries around the world, including Japan, China, and Iran. Of the eight children of Wilhelm Neufeld, only Ruth's father, Herman, and his family stayed in the Reedley area and at least some of Herman's children continued in the "faith of the fathers."

When the Reedley MB church began a German-language Bible School shortly after the arrival of Wilhelm Neufeld in the Reedley community in 1911, he was hired as one of the two members of the faculty, indicating that, at the time, the divide between the MBs and General Conference Mennonites was not as wide as it had once been in Russia and became later in Reedley and other places in North America. Evidence of cordial relationships between MBs and GCs at the time was also clear in a journal left behind by my great-grandmother, Margarethe Enns, who reported frequent social interaction between the Wilhelm Neufelds and MB lay leader Dietrich and Margarethe Enns, who lived in the same neighborhood in Reedley, on Friesen Avenue. The Neufeld address was 35 Friesen Ave. But by the time I was a child, the gap between the two versions of "Mennonite" had become wide, partly because of the "peace issue."

When it became necessary for us males to register for the draft at age 18, most (approximately 50%) of us in the Reedley MB church registered "1-A-O," meaning that we were willing to serve in the military, but as "non-combatant" "conscientious objectors," which almost always meant that we became members of the medical corps. Some (perhaps 25%) of us registered as "1-W" meaning that we were willing to be drafted into "alternative service" in hospitals or forestry work but we were not willing to take the military oath or wear a military uniform, and some (perhaps 25%) registered as "1-

A,” meaning that we were willing to serve as regular combatants in the military. Most of the other Mennonite denominations placed greater emphasis on rejection of any form of military service.

Like many in our Reedley MB community, I grew up thinking that it was necessary to balance two Christian mandates that sometimes contradicted each other. On the one hand, we are to "love our enemies" as Jesus taught in his words and demonstrated in his life--but, on the other hand, Jesus said, somewhat enigmatically, that we should “Give to God what belongs to God and give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar.” Paul instructed Christians to "obey the governing authorities." So, what to do when the "authorities" (who, we were taught, are ordained by God) ordered us as soldiers to kill our "enemies" when Jesus taught us that we should love them? Like many of my peers, I thought the best way to balance these two principles was to take the middle way that had been made available by our government, which was to serve in the military as required, but to refuse to use the weapons that kill. I thought I could serve my neighbors as a medic in the army, even though I was part of a larger military institution whose fundamental purpose was to destroy the "enemy." As an unarmed medic, I would not contribute directly to the killing. On the contrary, I would do what I could to provide care for the victims of the mayhem.

Unlike the suffering that was experienced by Mennonites and other conscientious objectors during WW I, our local draft board in Fresno County was well acquainted with Mennonites who refused to serve as "regular" members of the military and with the legal provisions made for conscientious objectors of various kinds, so it was not difficult to obtain one of the available alternative statuses, though such classifications were not automatic. One’s pattern of life needed to be consistent with pacifist professions, and verification from a pastor was required as part of the application process. I remember my conversation with Pastor H. R. Wiens shortly before my 18th birthday when I was required to register with the local draft board, but I recall no attempt on his part to persuade me to do anything other than what I had already decided, which was to register as a conscientious objector” (1-A-O).

During the 1950s there were some famous cases of requests being rejected by the draft board, such as Arthur Jost, a Reedley MB, whose request for U.S. citizenship (He was born in Canada.) was rejected because he refused to enter the military and swear the required oath. Arthur, who was later the founder of the Mennonite Kings View hospital in Reedley and served for many years as chair of the Fresno Pacific board of directors, fought rulings that went against him all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court--though the case was never actually heard there because the U.S. Department of Justice withdrew the case at the very last minute. And there was Ruth's GC friend, Henry Laemmlen whose request for CO

status was rejected because for a time he had been a member of the Reserved Officer Training Corps (ROTC) when he was a student at UC Davis. From our Reedley MB perspective, it was hard to understand such "radical" commitments to non-resistance when the government permitted the alternative that many of us selected. I had the feeling that these "radical" pacifists were more weird than heroic. I did learn recently (from *California Mennonites*) that the Reedley MB congregation was the only Mennonite church in California to adopt a policy of revoking the membership of any man who served as a combatant in the military—a boundary that was far more tightly drawn than is possible in MB churches these days, and I am not sure that this policy was ever strictly enforced.

Like many other components of culture, the pacifist heritage of the Mennonites can divide as well as unite communities. As I will indicate in my report on the Mennonites in Europe, many Dutch and German Mennonites abandoned the “peace position” entirely, during parts of their history at least. Mennonites in various places who refused to serve in the military themselves were willing to pay a special stipend so that someone else could serve in their place, and some even hired their own substitute soldiers themselves. Following the advice of the German military officers who resided in their area for a time, some of the Mennonite villages in S. Russia organized their own self defense units (*selbstschutz*) to gain at least some protection from the marauding groups of bandits since there was no functioning government to do this for them. I was not aware of this, but there was a long history behind the non-combatant position that I selected when I was confronted with the draft. Many Mennonite men in Russia had served with the military in con-combat roles such as medics and in transportation.

Of course other Mennonites were critical of these various forms of compromise. Some congregations simply excommunicated any member who served in the military. Many Mennonite men suffered a lot of harassment by soldiers when they were conscripted into the military when there was no non-combatant option, since they showed up on base as ordered but refused to handle weapons and some even refused to wear a military uniform. During WW II two Mennonite men died from beatings by their fellow soldiers. A civilian public service option was developed in Russia and later was one alternative in the U.S. and that is what many Mennonite men decided to do during WW II and during the wars that followed. Mennonites and other “Peace Church” groups (e.g. Society of Friends, Church of the Brethren) organized and financed programs of public services that the government deemed essential to the national interest such as forestry work and as orderlies in mental and other hospitals. A few Mennonites felt that it was wrong to cooperate with the war machine of the State in any way at all, so they refused to register with their local draft boards. There were some Mennonites who felt that if

it was wrong to go to war yourself, or to hire a substitute soldier to serve in your place, then it was also wrong to pay the taxes that were used to finance the wars that the government fought in their name and with their money, so they refused to pay the “military” portion of their federal taxes, which reaches beyond 50% of the total that we pay. And there have recently been increasing numbers of Mennonites who feel that simply refusing to serve in the military actually contributes little or nothing at all to real peacemaking, so they advocate active support for programs such as Victim-Offender Reconciliation Programs (VORP) that contribute to conflict resolution, and to campaigns to gain greater justice for minority groups such as native Americans and LGBTQ folks, since justice is a necessary precondition for real peace. This same logic has inspired the MCC, the inter-Mennonite relief organization, to critique Israel and actively advocate for justice for the Palestinians, a stance which has earned them the wrath of the many Americans (including many Mennonites) who still view Israel as God’s specially “chosen people” whose national interests must be protected at all costs.

The U.S. MB Conference recently took action to “soften” the articles in the denominational Confession of Faith by removing from the Confession any explicit commitment to refuse to participate in war. This revision raises questions about whether the MBs still belong to the family of churches known as “historic peace churches,” and is a far cry from the position once held by the MB congregation in Reedley that membership would be revoked for any man who served directly in a combat role in the military. Deciding just what it means to be a people of peace, it turns out, is still a very complicated and tricky business that can result in a lot of conflict.

MUSIC: COME, LET US SING TOGETHER

Music, too, can provide a form of cultural “glue” that binds a community together. Of course music can also create divisions within a community and between (and within) generations. For Mennonites of every stripe music has been an important component of culture, from the Anabaptist *Ausbund* hymnal that the Amish have used for 450 years, to the a cappella singing of the “Old Mennonites,” to the *Mennonite Concerto* in Winnipeg with full symphony orchestra, to Mennonite folk groups and rock bands. Music has been very important in my extended family. My great-grandfather Unruh, it was said, could pick up almost any kind of musical instrument and learn to play it within a short period of time, and my grandfather Unruh, too, could play several instruments. He left behind a collection of musical instruments, including a violin, saxophone, zither, and of course, a piano in the living room. My grandfather Unruh's brother, David, was one of the first members of an MB church in North America to receive a doctorate, and it was in music. He was a professional church musician (in

Presbyterian churches, mostly) and for years he operated a private music studio in Oakland, California. He annually conducted a performance by orchestra and chorus of Handel's *Messiah*.

I remember having mixed feelings about my mother's uncle David. On the one hand we admired him because he was educated and lived in a big city, but on the other hand he and his family seemed to be a bit "uppity," maybe because he had too much education, or maybe because he was married to a woman who did not have a Mennonite background and did not dress simply like a good Christian woman should. As I mentioned, my mother's aunt Marie was the first organist in the Henderson MB church in Nebraska, and, after the family moved to California, she was the accompanist in the Reedley MB church for many years. My father's uncle Peter played trombone in an instrumental group that accompanied Billy Sunday, the famous evangelist, and, later, Peter Enns directed the Reedley MB church choir for many years. My father's brother, Richard, was a professional organist and music teacher who lived in Barstow, California for many years, where he played in a "lounge." One of my father's cousins (another Harold Enns) was a professional musician who sang with opera companies in Europe. Another one of my dad's cousins, Ernie, directed the choir in the Reedley MB church for many years. My father sang in the choir and in men's groups and he occasionally sang baritone, as a substitute, in the Clarion Quartet in a Sunday morning radio broadcast on a local station. Other relatives have also been active in musical groups of various kinds and I have noted that Ruth's grandfather and many other Neufeld and Rempel relatives have also been musicians.

My own musical career began when my parents bought a trombone for me when I was in the sixth grade and I took music lessons in school from Mr. Chad Henderson, whom we feared because he would whack us on our heads or on our instruments with his baton when we made mistakes—which was all too often. My two great claims to musical fame are that I was selected as the best marching boy in the General Grant Junior High School marching band during the Pet Parade in Reedley (with a five dollar prize) and I was selected to play a trombone solo (*The Hills of Home*) during our eighth grade graduation ceremony from General Grant in 1949. While in Immanuel I sang in the choir and was a member (bass) of the Immanuel boys' quartet. We sang in the Reedley area and we traveled around the state with other Immanuel musical groups, singing in MB churches here and there. One of the songs our quartet sang was *Ich Weiss Einen Strom* ("I Know of a Stream") in German, a song that had been a favorite of the Mennonites in both Russia and the U.S. I also played trombone in the Immanuel band and with a brass quartet with three Immanuel classmates and we continued to play together from time to time during our first years of college. We even played on KRDU, the local Christian radio

station. I played trombone in an orchestra in the Reedley MB church, and, as I mentioned earlier, I was part of a brass octet that performed for the large crowd at an MB *Zaengerfest* (Song Festival) in Fresno one year. While a student at Reedley College I played in the marching band for a short period of time and then sang in the choir and men's chorus during most of my two years at R.C. During my sophomore year I was a member of the Reedley College men's quartet, but we rarely actually performed. I sang in choirs during my time in the U.S. Army, in both Texas and Korea. During a Christmas program in the Reedley MB church one year, I was in a boy's trio and was required to sing one verse of *We Three Kings* as a solo, which I dreaded. I continued to sing in church choirs until about 2010, when I dropped out because of hearing loss and because too much contemporary church music is above my range. I sang in choirs but only once again did I consent to sing a brief solo during a Christmas program in the Goleta Valley Baptist Church in about 1966. Baptist musical standards were not up to what they were in Mennonite circles.

Then as now, music could be an occasion for controversy and conflict. Of course musical categories such as "rap," "hip-hop," and even "rock" were unknown in the days of my childhood. But there were standards for what constituted music that was "good" or "bad." In the Reedley MB church the congregation mostly sang hymns and gospel songs in four-part harmony, so that was "good" music. Choir music in church and school has consistently been more "classical," and that is also "good." But one of our teachers in Immanuel was convinced that music in a minor key was "of the devil" and should not be sung or performed by Christians. Godly music could only be done in a major key. My father and some others were concerned that some of the music that we played in our brass quartet was too close to jazz, which was worldly and should be avoided by Christians. He tried to persuade us not to play *When the Saints Go Marching In* and *How High the Moon* but we were never convinced, so we played these and other "Stamps-Baxter" types of music, but we did try not to get too "carried away."

FOODS: MENNONITE SOUL FOOD

I have already mentioned that we MBs from Russia ate several foods (part of our "material culture") that "outsiders" (including other Mennonites with a Swiss or South German heritage) knew nothing about. *Zweibach* are a double-decker yeast-dough bun. *Verenika* are a thin, circular dough folded in half over hoop cheese and then boiled, fried or baked and sometimes served with a sauce (preferences varied, depending upon where the family originated). *Pluma-mousse* is a thickened compote of dried fruits. *Borscht* is a Russian soup made with cabbage, beets, potatoes, etc. We sometimes ate these foods at our grandparents homes but I think our extended family meals were more likely to consist of

an Americanized version of *faspah* (supper) that typically included cold cuts (bologna and American Velveeta cheese), potato salad, home-canned pickles, red Jello (often with canned fruit cocktail mixed in), and, more often than not, cookies or cake for dessert. We usually had *zweibach* with our *faspahs*. Swiss and German Mennonites had their own different cultural traditions (e.g. “shoe-fly pie”), so, of course, they do not know anything about the kinds of Russian Mennonite “soul” foods that I just mentioned. These foods have pretty much disappeared from the menus of our children and grandchildren, except as part of the nostalgia that comes with some of our ritual events such as the MCC Sale and family gatherings.

RITUALS: MARKING TRANSITIONS THROUGH LIFE

There were a series of important cultural-religious rituals (“rites of passage,” or “rites of transition”) that also helped to bind the community together. Funerals were significant social gatherings that drew extended families together along with large numbers of the church community and served to reinforce many of the important values that the community shared in common. The custom when I was a child included everyone filing past the open casket in front of the sanctuary to view the body--and to greet the grieving family members. Funeral services included congregational hymns, and sermons that were frequently “evangelistic” in nature, to take advantage of a somber moment and the presence of “unsaved” family members and others from the local community who were not church members. Family and others drove in a procession, accompanied by the city police, to the Reedley cemetery overlooking the Kings River for burial (and some more prayers, hymns and another brief sermon). Relatives and close friends were then invited to a meal much like what was served at our grandparents’ homes for *faspah* in the church basement (and, later, the social hall) and an opportunity to visit with relatives and to reminisce about the deceased person. An earlier custom of taking a family photograph with the body in an open casket had died out by the time I was a child (**Photo #3**).

Weddings were similarly important occasions for gathering and reaffirming values that were important to the community. It is my understanding that in earlier years weddings were usually done immediately following Sunday morning worship services since it was difficult to make the trip by horse and buggy from distant farms into town for another meeting and weddings were simple and brief. I have mentioned that even in our day there was a custom of an “Announcement Sunday” two weeks prior to the wedding at which time the impending event was publicly announced during the morning worship service. I wore my expensive new wedding suit for this special occasion. I remember weddings as mostly somber events with little room for informality or “frivolity” (which was once officially

forbidden in an MB Conference resolution) though I also remember waiting with anticipation to see if someone would make some kind of mistake during the ceremony so we could laugh (or at least snicker). Of course a wedding ceremony included a sermon. These simple and sober weddings represented considerable change from the elaborate affairs that happened in Mennonite communities in Russia where wedding celebrations sometimes lasted for days and included folk dances and games as well as generous quantities of alcohol to help make things happier.

Celebrations of significant wedding anniversaries (e.g. 25 and 50 years) were also important socio-religious rituals. The decline in communal celebrations of wedding anniversaries is another indicator of a loosening of the social and cultural ties that once helped to bind the community together. For the celebration of my parents' 50th (Golden) wedding anniversary, for example, we children invited some 200 people to a catered dinner in the Reedley MB church social hall, complete with rented dinnerware, table clothes and napkins, and bouquets of red roses everywhere. It cost a lot of time and money to prepare, but the result was spectacular! When our 50th anniversary (which we shared with friends Wilfred and Erma Martens) arrived, CCCMB hosted a reception in the social hall during the break between the worship service and the Christian education hour. Refreshments were provided by family members. Recent 50th anniversaries of CCCMB people have come and gone with no public acknowledgement at all. Our children made sure that our recent 60th wedding anniversary was celebrated with flowers, cake, coffee, etc. in the College Community Church and then again, later, as a family event in the home of Terri and Dan in Columbus, Ohio. A parallel phenomenon is the demise of public celebrations of significant birthday events.

In the old world, weddings, funerals, and anniversaries, like baptisms and graduations, were ritual actions that the community did *to* and *for* the generally passive recipients of these rituals. Tradition pretty much dictated the form and much of the content of the ceremonies. Using these occasions to creatively express individual personalities or tastes is a fairly recent invention and is one more indicator of the transition from the old world to something new. Moving such celebrations out of the church into the family, leaving them to the initiative of the persons themselves, or simply ignoring them completely, serve as further indicators of the thinning out of social relationships and cultural bonding that I am trying to describe in these memoirs.

MARGINALITY: BEING STRANGERS IN OUR OWN LAND

Finally, I think we Mennonites were bound together by a shared sense of social and cultural marginality, tinged with at least a slight feeling of inferiority. We were a "minority group," a numerically small

community of relatively new immigrants to America who were just learning how to "succeed" culturally, socially, and economically. We had a vague historical memory that our ancestors had been the victims of persecution because of their peculiar religious convictions and cultural practices. Our immigrant great-grandparents and grandparents and even some of our parents were hard-working farmers who still spoke English with a German accent, and there were reports that fellow Mennonites had been discriminated against as recently as during World War II. We were proud of our churches and schools, but at the same time I think we also felt at least a little bit embarrassed by who we were and we envied the "English" people in town who always seemed to be just a little bit richer, smarter, and more sophisticated than we were. I think we were surprised when we learned that we could actually keep up with them in academic, athletic, business and other competitive contexts. I suspect that the sense of security that comes with being a part of a small supportive community when adversity and failure are distinct possibilities contributed to the cohesion of our community.

So I grew up in a tightly knit community in which the various components of our social lives, family, work, church, school, recreation, etc. all overlapped and, in many ways, reinforced each other. Of course there were also tensions and conflicts that required choices and prioritization. Money or time that was given to the church, for example, would not be available to the family, and expectations in the public schools or in the business world sometimes conflicted with what was taught and expected in the home or the church. When choices were necessary, it was clear to me that my grandparents, parents, many of my relatives and many of the other people around me gave very high priority to the church. When a meeting or activity was scheduled in or by the church, there was a presumption that we would be present and we would not only participate, but when it was appropriate, we would contribute.

My father, to illustrate what I mean, served on numerous church boards and committees during his lifetime, including membership on the Immanuel School Board, the Finance Committee that helped to build the "new" Reedley MB sanctuary in 1952 and he represented the Pacific District Board of Trustees in the meetings that led to the building of the College Community Church in Clovis. He was one of five members of the 75th Anniversary Committee for the Reedley MB Church. My father's churchly commitments clearly took high priority in his life and these commitments extended far beyond the local congregation. We once asked him how many district, national, or Canadian-U.S. MB General Conferences he had attended and the next morning he reported that he had attended 27 such conferences, usually as a delegate and sometimes with committee responsibilities. Of course in a community where everything is connected to everything, being involved in the church could also be good for business

and being successful in business often led to leadership positions in the church. Social relationships were more than a "zero-sum game" in which what was gained in one area meant an equivalent loss in another. What happened in our schools often reinforced what we learned at home and both school and family supported and were supported by activities in the church.

Many of the social institutions and cultural practices with which I grew up no longer exist, and those that do continue are no longer interrelated in the way that they once were. At least not in the forms as I knew them as a child and young person. I turn next to some comments about *how* and *why* things have changed as they have.

SOCIAL CHANGE: TOWARD AN "IRON CAGE" OR "HUMPTY-DUMPTY"?

If it is true that in the old world everything was connected to everything, it is also true that for the last several generations, especially, everything is constantly changing--and sometimes very rapidly. The social world that I was born into in 1935, just after the Great Depression and shortly before the beginning of World War II, was not the same as the world that I left for military service as a young adult shortly after the Korean War, or that we experience now in our old age. Few big social changes happen suddenly. They usually come gradually, over long periods of time--though the cataclysmic changes that the Mennonites experienced during and after the Russian revolution and World War I happened within a period of only a few short years. Their world was turned upside down almost overnight, but I and my generation have experienced nothing like that. I have personally experienced no war, famine, serious epidemic, economic depression, or natural disaster--at least not in my own immediate environment, and not until the "new coronavirus" pandemic of 2020. But things have changed a lot, so I will offer some comments on how and why these changes have happened as they have, for me and for many others in similar social circumstances.

Note: When I wrote the previous paragraph, I had no idea that during the winter and spring of 2020 society and economy in much of the world would be turned upside down by the Novel Coronavirus-19 pandemic. I did not expect that I would ever experience "shelter-in-place" and "social distancing." I did not expect that I would ever see Americans wearing face masks (as is common throughout Asia and elsewhere, but not here in California!), nor did I expect to witness massive unemployment, a collapsing stock market, empty shelves in our supermarkets, cancelled sports seasons with vacant stadiums and arenas, and few vehicles on our freeways. I could not have predicted that strategies for

response (including whether to wear a mask or not and when to reopen schools, businesses, churches, synagogues, mosques, etc.) would be radically polarized along party lines. Analyses of the long-term implications of the catastrophe that is all around us as I write in March 2021 will have to be done by someone else at some later time. One reality that will have to be explained, though, is how and why it happened that approximately one fourth of the reported cases and one fourth of the deaths worldwide were here in the U.S.A. No other developed nation responded so unsuccessfully to the COVID-19 epidemic. I will have more to say about this in a final digression.

PERSPECTIVES: IT DEPENDS HOW YOU LOOK AT IT

Some very astute observers of social change have been trying for more than 150 years to find ways to describe what has happened in our western “modern” world and then to explain why social conditions were changing as they were. I will very briefly introduce just a few examples, not because they got everything right, but because these are the kinds of ideas that have shaped the thinking of many social scientists and others (including me) about what has happened in society in recent decades. For me, these ideas are not just remote abstractions, like mathematical or chemical formulas. They have become part of the fabric of my being. They are part of who I am, so I cannot really complete my recollections and reflections about my life without introducing at least a few of these basic sociological notions.

German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies (1855-1936) proposed a simple classification of societies into two types that he called *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft*, usually translated as “community” and “society.” A community is a face-to-face group that is tied together by subjective feelings of affection or shared tradition. Villages, families, neighborhoods, and rural communities are examples of *gemeinschaft* types of societies. A *gesellschaft* (society) bases social relationships on rational agreements and contracts. Individuals relate to groups “instrumentally”: that is, they use groups for what they can get out of them. *Gesellschaft* comes with industrialization, urbanization and bureaucratization. It is the form of social relationships that fits well with individualism. As is true of most sociological concepts, *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft* are not mutually exclusive, and one is not “better” than the other. Social relationships are not either one or the other, but real societies are almost always some kind of mixture of the two. So, for example, there is a lot of *gesellschaft* in Japanese society and some *gemeinschaft* remains in American society, but there is probably more community left in Japan than what we see in “mainstream” American society. One simple way to summarize the story of my life is to say that I grew up in an older social world that was characterized by a lot of *gemeinschaft* “community” but my social world has

transitioned toward a lot more *gesellschaft* “society.” Some good things have been gained in this transition, but a lot has been lost, too.

Another German sociologist, Max Weber (1864 – 1920), feared that “rationality” and “bureaucracy” were turning individual human beings into little more than cogs in the wheels of huge industrial “machines,” or, to use another of his metaphors, locking us into an impersonal, tightly structured “iron cage.” Furthermore, Weber pointed out that rational, bureaucratic ways of organizing institutions looked pretty much the same whether in a socialist or capitalist context. The organizational structures of government agencies and capitalist corporations look a lot alike, as do large church and other religious organizations, and these social structures greatly impact how we think and how we live.

French sociologist Emile Durkheim (1858 – 1917) thought that it was possible for society to hold together even though individuals and institutions were becoming ever more narrowly specialized and fragmented—but he worried that too much specialization and too much disintegration of traditional patterns of social relationships could result in a sense of personal lostness and meaninglessness that he called *anomie*—like fragments of a shattered Humpty Dumpty. Many observers have worried for a long time about excessive “individualism,” especially here in the U.S. Robert Bellah, to cite but one recent example, suggested that earlier in U.S. history, more people valued commitments to community than we see at the present time. For some Americans, their sense of commitment to community was based on biblical faith while others held “civic” commitments to good citizenship that valued the nation and the local community, and there are still people like this around. But Bellah thought that two kinds of individualism were replacing those earlier patterns of commitment and community. “Utilitarian individualism” focuses on the acquisition of material goods as the primary measure of “success” in life while “expressive individualism” values good feelings and personal happiness above all else. In both kinds of individualism, the self takes priority over any sense of commitment to faith or to community. And, to cite but one more example of metaphors for social change, my friend and colleague at FPU, cultural historian Delbert Wiens, uses the images of “village,” “town,” and “city” as shorthand ways to describe three quite different patterns of living together.

Perhaps the most “radical” explanation for why societies change was that of Karl Marx (1818 – 1883). “Class conflict” between the “haves” and the “have-nots,” he thought, served as the “locomotive of history.” That is, there has always been inequality in every society and the people at the bottom have always eventually risen up to change things. Under the capitalist system there is a built-in tendency for “the rich to get richer and the poor to get poorer,” so that eventually there will be an explosion

(revolution) in which the oppressed lower classes can no longer tolerate the situation they are in so they will take action to throw out the whole system and start a new one. Capitalism, Marx believed, is just the latest in a long history of social and economic arrangements that have always produced large numbers of people who find themselves taken advantage of by systems that are unequal, unjust, and primarily benefit the few at the top.

Capitalism, Marx said, not only produces new forms of inequality between the “bourgeois” owners who control the “means of production” and the “proletariat” workers who have nothing to sell except their own labor, but capitalism also “alienates” people from finding satisfaction in their work; from healthy social relationships with each other; from nature; and, finally, even from our own selves as human beings. Among other things, government welfare programs and strong labor unions have helped to temporarily delay the inevitable explosion, but people can only take so much before they will rebel. Marx did not get everything right, but his theory of social change does explain a lot.

I am not much of a Marxist so I will not have a lot to say in these memoirs about economic inequality, or about other forms of social injustice such as racism and sexism. I will not even mention the social and economic effects of climate change, which might be the most daunting challenge currently faced by us human beings. If I were more of a Marxist, for example, I might have started my family histories by pointing out that everywhere my ancestors have traveled since leaving Poland, they have occupied lands from which indigenous nomadic peoples had recently been expelled. That was true in S. Russia, in Kansas, and in the Central Valley in California. To cite just one more example, the early economic development of the U.S., from which we still benefit today, was built largely on the backs of slaves imported from Africa. So, in many ways my family has been advantaged at the cost of other peoples. But, rightly or wrongly, I have chosen not to emphasize the realities of class and socio-economic conflicts in these memoirs.

I do want to note that the widening gap between the top and bottom classes in the American stratification system is exactly what Marx predicted would eventually happen in a capitalist society: “the rich get richer and the poor get poorer.” Numbers like these show up in the media from time to time, but several years ago Robert Reich described just how wide the gap has become between the highest paid executives in America’s largest corporations and financial institutions and what other workers are paid. In Japan, on average the top executives were paid about 11 times what the lowest paid workers received. In Germany and France, the numbers were 12 and 15 times. In Italy, Canada, South Africa and Britain, the top executives received 20 to 21 times the income of the lowest paid

workers. In Mexico and Venezuela, the numbers were up to 47 and 50 times. In the U.S., the highest paid executives received 475 times what the lowest paid workers received. CNBC recently reported that between 1978 and 2019 the average pay of top executives had increased about 1000% while pay for the average worker had increased 12%. In 1965 in the U.S. the top CEOs were paid 20 times more than the average worker but by 2019 they were paid 278 times the average worker. In 2019 the average annual pay for the CEOs in the largest 350 companies was about \$15 million. So, clearly, something has happened in the structure of the U.S. economy in recent years that has allowed the gap between the rich and the poor to increase dramatically. In contrast, many centuries ago the Greek philosopher, Plato, in imagining what a good society might look like, suggested that the differential between the top and the bottom should not be more than five times. More than one analyst of social change in America has suggested that the growing gap between the top and the bottom of the economic and social class systems might be the most important change that has happened in the last 50 years. I have been the beneficiary of many of these economic inequities, but I will not have much to say about that in these memoirs.

Of course others besides sociologists have been trying to describe and evaluate what has been happening in our changing social world. Sociologists do not often quote poetry, but an excerpt from W. B. Yeats' poem, "The Second Coming," does show up with some frequency in the sociological literature. The poem was written in 1919, just after the end of the First World War and includes the following.

Turning, turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer
Things fall apart, the center cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world.

In case you were wondering, as I was, a "gyre" is wind, rain, or especially an ocean current that moves in a circular or spiral pattern. I would also like to mention that UCSB sociology professor Thomas O'Dea gave me a copy of a collection of Yeats' poems (including "The Second Coming") as a farewell gift when we left for Japan in 1967. But my point is that poet Yeats, and many others, had the same concerns that the sociologists were writing about: Is there some kind of "center" that can "hold," or are things really "falling apart" into chaos, anarchy and anomie? And once Humpty-Dumpty has fallen and shattered, can the pieces ever be put back together again?

There were also some well-known authors who wrote novels that fall into the "dystopia" category, meaning that they were very pessimistic, the opposite of "utopia." Aldous Huxley wrote *Brave New*

World in 1931 as a prediction of what he imagined life might be like in AD 2540. He was very worried about what might happen as more and more areas of life were structured along the same lines as the industrializing work-place, an emerging pattern of tightly organized social relationships that Huxley called “Fordism.” Huxley pictured a coming dehumanized society in which persons were essentially mass-produced and then programmed to fit into the patterns that were necessary to keep things going. To keep the workers happy, sex was detached from reproduction and from anything resembling “love,” so sex (along with a drug that he called *soma*) was a purely recreational activity that distracted people from paying attention to their real situations. Of course the population in Huxley’s novel was so thoroughly programmed that there was no possibility that they could even imagine that conditions might be any different.

I mention Huxley because in 1959 when I was a senior student at UCSB, Aldous Huxley was on campus as a visiting professor. He conducted a seminar attended by 20 or so of us undergraduates. Huxley was about 65 years old at that time, but I remember him as tall, gaunt, frail, very old, and nearly blind. He had become a convert to Vedanta Hinduism and for many years he had experimented with a whole variety of drugs, from LSD to peyote, because he was interested in how human perception works, and he wanted to experience how drugs alter these processes. I attended Huxley’s seminar at UCSB as a representative of the sociology department but I think I was still too young and too naive to really understand what was going on, so my main impression was that Huxley was very weird. But it was fun to be that close to a world-class intellectual and his pessimistic (or was it “realistic”?) vision of the future left its impact on me.

Karl Marx thought that class conflict was the central “locomotive of history,” and there is surely a lot of truth to that, but perhaps there were also other “locomotives” pulling the train of social change than just that one. It is not hard to recognize that changes in technology bring changes in social relationships behind them. Inventions like the printing press, automobiles, birth control, and computers obviously change the way we live. Less obvious is the impact that bureaucratization has had on how we think and how we live together. Since I agree with Peter Berger and others that these two things—technology and bureaucracy—have been two of the most powerful factors that have impacted the changing shape of our social relationships, I will explain why I think this is so.

TECHNOLOGY: DISCOVERIES, INVENTIONS AND DISLOCATIONS

I will describe just a few of the many changes in technology that have happened in recent decades. My parents could recall riding from their homes on their farms to town in horse-drawn buggies. (In **Photo**

#1, the infant on the front seat is my father.) Ruth's father remembered riding through the Russian snowfields in a horse-drawn sleigh. It is hard to overestimate the impact that the automobile has had on how we live together--an impact to which my family has contributed as automobile dealers, and to which all of us contribute as drivers and passengers in cars. For some reason the automobile business seemed to attract a number of Mennonites, including my father and my brother, my uncles John Enns and Marvin Just and several of my cousins. For a time, approximately one half of the car dealerships in Reedley and Dinuba were owned by Mennonites. Cars are a great convenience but they also consume an inordinate amount of raw materials, space, energy, and money, to say nothing of injuries and death to countless animals and humans alike, nor the contribution of fossil-fuel-powered vehicles to the pollution of our environment. The centrality of the automobile in how we have put our society together became obvious to us as we learned to use and appreciate the amazing public transportation system in Japan. The *Shinkansen* Bullet Trains arrive on schedule 99% of the time—and that means within seconds of the scheduled times for arrival and departure. Of course we frequently complained about having to ride in commuter trains that were so crowded during rush hours that we, along with the throngs of our fellow passengers, had to be pushed into the cars so the doors could close. We were sometimes packed so tightly that we literally could not move our feet, so when the train car swayed, there was no place to fall, except into the tightly packed bodies of fellow passengers. No one really likes to travel like this, so more and more people are driving their own cars in Japan, too, but it is impossible to imagine what would happen if each person in those massive crowds of commuters in trains and busses was down on a street or highway driving along alone in their own private automobile (or, worse, SUV, Hummer, or big pickup truck), American style. A joke that we heard in Japan was that they planned to keep on producing cars until the last car was slipped into the last open space on the last road in Japan, and then they would simply crush the cars flat, pave over the top and start all over again. Whether in Japan or the U.S., automobiles have reshaped both the landscape and our patterns of social relationships. Think about what happens in a dating relationship that has to be conducted, as in Japan, in a crowded train car rather than in a private automobile (a “bedroom on wheels,” it was said), to mention just one small example of how the automobile helps to shape social relationships. On a much larger scale, think about how freeways both facilitate the flow of traffic and create boundaries and barriers within and between neighborhoods. I will not even mention the impact that our reliance on automobiles has had on our changing climate.

I think we all know that the availability of birth control technology has contributed substantially to the re-shaping of sexual and family relationships. The "typical" Mennonite family size has gone from seven or eight children in my grandparents' generation to four or five in my parents' generation to two or three during my generation. And the typical American woman these days gives birth to fewer than two children, which is below the number of births (2.1 births per woman) that are required to maintain the size of the population at its current level (Zero Population Growth, or ZPG). Japan and several other industrialized nations are now in a pattern of declining population, with birth rates down around 1.2 births per woman, which places a huge burden on the small numbers of young people to make provision for the many senior citizens.

Medical technology has dramatically changed patterns of life expectancy. My father's birth mother died (from a tapeworm we were told) when he was about six years old. Ruth's grandfather, too, lost his first wife to death early in their marriage. The first child (a son) born into my mother's family died in infancy, as did many other newborns in those years. Ruth's cousin, Paul Klassen, mentioned in his family history that one of his relatives had 11 children with his first wife and then 10 more with his second wife (who was only 16 years old at the time of their marriage). Ten of these 21 children died in childbirth or infancy. Loewen and Nolt report that a survey of the 1500 graves in an old Mennonite cemetery in Pennsylvania indicated that about one third of the persons buried there had died before the age of ten. Small families have become the norm, partly because of the availability of reliable forms of birth control but also because the probability of early death has decreased substantially because of improved sanitation and more effective medical care. Large numbers of children are no longer needed to provide a kind of insurance for the future.

When it was first invented, television was officially prohibited by the MB denomination, but it was hard to maintain a distinction between watching movies in a theater (which was prohibited as recently as the mid-1960s), and on a television screen in one's home. So it soon became obvious that it would be impossible for the church to prohibit members from bringing TV into their homes. My Uncle Art and Aunt Ruby in Pasadena were the first good Christian people we knew who owned a television set, though it was initially located in a recreation room in a separate building behind their house (where they also had a pool table--also on the list of questionable activities at the time). Uncle John and Aunt Susan were the first relatives (as far as I know) in the Reedley area to have a TV set in their home--though they thought it prudent to hide the antenna in their attic at first because a visible antennae might well upset some fellow church members. It is hard to overestimate the impact that bringing so much of

the world around us right into our homes via the TV screen has had on how we think and act. It will take some time to appraise the impact that computer and other information technologies will have on how we live together, and even on how the brain functions. As has been typical of Mennonite responses to most new technologies, Ruth used to say, only half -jokingly, that she thinks computers were invented by the devil. But I haven't heard her say that for a while.

We do remain perplexed (and troubled, as are many others) by what we see of how the truly amazing new communication technologies are being used. There is something bizarre about a group of friends sitting close to one another around a table but each person is engrossed in playing a game, texting, or conversing via phone with some other person far away. I cannot help but wonder what is going on when I observe young couples whom I judge from their body language to be on "dates," sitting side-by-side but each is having a phone conversation or texting with someone else, or, worse, playing a game on their hand held device. It is hard for me to understand why conversing with some distant person seems to take priority over "paying attention" to someone who is immediately "present." In fact, some 30 years ago Robert Bellah bemoaned the fact that many Americans seem to be so "distracted" with so many other things that they have little time or energy to really "pay attention" to what is actually going on in their own immediate environment. And this was before the ubiquitous use of the smart phones, computer games, and ear buds that many people seem to think of as appendages that are as natural and necessary to a normal human life as eyes, ears, noses, hands and feet. Maybe it is appropriate to wonder if the devil might have something to do with this after all.

BUREAUCRACY: COGS IN A BIG MACHINE

Some of the impacts that technology has had on how we live our lives together are fairly easy to recognize. It is more difficult to understand why many sociologists believe that "bureaucracy" has played an equally important role in shaping who we are and how we live.

Bureaucracy seems to be a dirty word for many Americans, but if we stop and think about it, many of the characteristics of a bureaucracy are actually quite benign. For example, everyone in a bureaucratic organization specializes in one narrowly prescribed task. This is different from what happens in a traditional social organization such as a family (or a small church), where the role of "wife" (or "pastor") typically includes a whole range of responsibilities, from chef to financial manager to nurse to activity director to chauffeur--whatever it takes to keep things going. So it was said that "a woman's work is never done." Work in a bureaucracy is different from how my farmer grandparents lived and worked. They had to be "Jacks-of-all-trades," meaning that they knew how to grow, cut, apply sulfur

and dry peaches in the sun; care for grapes and produce raisins; keep chickens and process eggs; care for cows and horses; and produce milk for delivery to a dairy. Both Ruth's parents and my grandparents had the ability to maintain and repair much of the machinery that they used on their farms.

My father's work still had some of this same quality of great diversity in what he was responsible for in his small business in town and on his farms. In addition to selling and servicing cars, with all of the legal and financial "paper work" that was involved, and making sure that the farm work was done, he developed one of the farms into residential property, so he had to know something about real estate and the economics and politics of land development. Ruth's parents, too, engaged in many kinds of activities, mostly related to a variety of small farming operations, including transporting chickens and other farm products by truck to the wholesale markets in San Francisco and Los Angeles. In fact, a typical pattern for many of my relatives and classmates in my parents' and my generation in Reedley is that they moved from farms into towns where they became small business people or public servants such as teachers or social workers. Many of the people who do continue to live on small farms are "gentlemen" farmers, with another business or profession in town, contracting with someone else to care for their land and crops.

Most of us in my generation (and this is even more true for our children and grandchildren) spend most of our working lives in one specific kind of institution (school, government agency, corporation, medical facility, etc.), doing one specific type of task--teaching or selling or repairing or administering. One result of each person focusing on a very specific task is that workers become very skilled in what they do. They become "experts" who can perform at a high level of competence in a narrow specialty. We expect (or at least we hope) that when we go to a heart surgeon, for example, or trust the pilot of an airplane, or rely on the advice of a financial counselor or attorney, that those people will be competent in what they do. Most of us recognize that a "Jack of all trades" is also likely to be a "master of none," so it makes sense for each person in a highly complex urban social environment to be a specialist, and bureaucracies are organizations that are designed to take advantage of the expertise of the specialists who are organized around some specific task, such as a school that provides educational services, a hospital that provides medical care, or a church that provides whatever it is that churches do.

I am always amazed at the organizational complexity of a place like a major airport, a large hospital, a university—or any large social institution. There are so many specific tasks that must be taken care of by someone if the organization is going to fulfill its functions and avoid falling into chaos. Of course

someone has to know enough to keep all of these specialists coordinated and productive, and that, too becomes a specialization called "management," or "administration." We trust that someone will make sure that the experts we rely on for medical care, or for legal or financial advice, or for instruction in our classrooms are properly qualified and remain current in the latest developments in their respective areas of expertise. A chiropractic "doctor," like bone-cracking "Dr." Schlichting whom I feared in my youth, had learned to set joints from his father back in Corn, Oklahoma, but we do not expect to be treated by people like that in a modern urban hospital. We expect that doctors with titles such as "oncologist" or "pediatrician" will actually have the specialized knowledge and skills that the titles imply, and we expect that rules such as those that prohibit fraud, nepotism and bribery will be in place so that people actually possess the appropriate skills and were not hired simply because of family connections or because they managed to pay someone to obtain their prestigious and high-paying positions.

Another related feature of life in cities is that not only individuals but institutions, too, are highly specialized. When an institution or corporation is focused on providing only (or at least mostly) one single service or producing only one product, the institution or corporation can become very good at what it does. When our AC stops working, we call an air conditioning company because we expect them to have the knowledge, skills and equipment that other kinds of companies do not have, but we contact another kind of organization when we need new tires, legal advice, or bank services. Some things can be done best by a family or group of friends, others by a business or corporation, but other things can only be done by an agency of the government. So institutions become specialized and compartmentalized, and, in theory at least, can become very good at what they do.

Churches, too, become part of this process. Our Anabaptist ancestors were among the first to make the case that the church should be independent of government control. By now most of us agree that when church and state become too closely intertwined, both are compromised in what they have to offer. When family connections or religious affiliations or racial backgrounds take priority in hiring (or not hiring) for a position that requires specific technical or professional expertise, that is often prohibited because unqualified people end up in critical positions, where they make mistakes that can have disastrous consequences—and other qualified persons are prevented from exercising their skills because of racial or gender discrimination. A university in which the church dictates what may and may not be taught in the classroom or researched in the laboratory is in violation of the important principle of "academic freedom" and is not likely to be accredited as a "real" university where freedom

of inquiry and open debate are essential to the nature of the institution. And a church that too overtly becomes too closely identified with one political party or candidate may be in danger of losing both its spiritual integrity and its tax-exempt status.

So one of the characteristics of this new world in which most of us now live is that institutions become ever more specialized, compartmentalized, and largely independent of one another. Most of us learn how to deal with this. We learn not to expect psychological counseling from the clerk in the supermarket even though he might ask "How are you this morning?" or "How were your holidays?" We know that he does not really want us to answer questions like that while other customers wait in line behind us, so something like "Fine, thanks." is good enough. We learn to respond differently if that same question is asked by our pastor or our therapist in her office. We learn not to expect to arrange loans from our medical doctor, or to receive help with car repairs from our attorney. We learn where to go for which services, and in the course of our day, we are likely to move from one specialized institution to another, starting and ending at home with our family, and then adjusting to the different expectations that are appropriate in each specialized social setting without even thinking about it very much: school or work, gym, dental clinic, bank or credit union, super market, church--each of which provides us with something that we "need" to sustain our normal way of life.

I will mention just a few other characteristics of the bureaucratized world in which we live much of our lives. A bureaucracy is organized as a hierarchy. Almost every person in the organization is responsible to someone "above" them and many are also responsible for others who are "below" them in the organizational pyramid. As division chair at Fresno Pacific, for example, I was accountable, to some extent at least, to the academic dean for the performance of faculty in my division. As dean, I was accountable to the president for how well division chairs did their jobs, and indirectly, through the division chairs, I was responsible for how well faculty performed in their classrooms. On a couple of occasions while I was the dean, the president called to report that students (or their parents) were unhappy with the performance of a professor, and then it was my responsibility to see what could be done about it. Mostly I tried to work through the division chairs who were on the next tier below me in the organizational pyramid. So each person in a bureaucracy has specific duties for which they are responsible and for which they can be held accountable to someone "above" them.

For most positions in a bureaucracy there are clearly specified qualifications that must be met (degrees, licenses, certificates, credentials) before one can even be hired. There are some exceptions, but for the most part there is not much point in applying for a teaching position without a teaching credential, or

for a nursing job without the required certification. Specialized schools are authorized as “gatekeepers” to grant these degrees, licenses, certificates and credentials and the schools will be in trouble if the people they certify do not actually possess the expected knowledge and skills. Granting teaching and administrative credentials of various kinds became a big business for FPU and accounts, in part, for the growth (and even the survival) of the institution. Of course the process of obtaining permission from the state to grant these credentials and certificates requires a very high level of bureaucratic expertise.

In a bureaucracy, expectations, prohibitions, and requirements are clearly (hopefully) recorded in written contracts, handbooks, organizational charts, job descriptions, mission statements, strategic plans, policies and procedures, etc. It has not always been taken-for-granted that keeping written records is a good thing. One of the controversial issues in some Mennonite churches during the nineteenth century was whether it was appropriate for a congregation to have a written constitution and to keep written minutes of congregational meetings. Writing things down seemed like a threat to the traditional authority of the leaders and smacked too much of the legal system. That was once a divisive issue in some Mennonite churches, but most institutions have moved beyond that, so one of my first tasks as dean at Fresno Pacific was to revise and update the “Faculty Handbook” which specified in ever-increasing detail what the institution expected of its faculty and what the faculty could expect from the institution. Institutional decisions are recorded in written minutes of meetings so that they can be referred to in case of disagreements and can serve as precedents for future decisions. Written contracts spell out in considerable detail what the institution can expect from its workers—and what the workers can expect from the institution. All of this is in the context of a legal system that, ideally, protects the rights of both the members of the organization and the organization itself. A bureaucracy is a very “rational” kind of organization.

Bureaucracies have other good points, too, like protecting individuals from arbitrary discrimination, abuse, or exploitation at the hands of their prejudiced or incompetent superiors. Regardless of how one might feel about the positive and negative features of bureaucracies, they are everywhere and seem to be unavoidable, since they seem to provide a better alternative to “traditional” ways of organizing society that relied heavily on the “primary” relationships that we experience in families, clans, tribes and friendship groups. While some remnants of these traditional primary ways of organizing society do continue to survive in cities, they do not work as well in many institutions in urban environments as more rational “secondary” organizations, like bureaucracies. So we might as well learn to deal with

bureaucracies, since they seem to be here to stay, something like the “law” of gravity which one ignores at one’s own peril.

On the other hand, it is easy to think of reasons why bureaucracies often fail to function as intended. One problem is that when a person performs well in one position, it seems reasonable to promote that person to a higher level of responsibility (and pay). And when the person does well at that level, too, it seems reasonable to promote the person again--until the person reaches a level at which he or she is no longer able to perform effectively. But, having once been promoted, it is difficult to demote a person back down to a level of responsibility (and pay) at which the person can perform competently, so, theoretically at least, eventually every position in a bureaucracy is held by persons who are not capable of doing their jobs well. Sociologists call this the “Peter Principle.” I thought I recognized something of this in the trajectory of my own professional career. I did a good enough job in the classroom at Pacific that I was selected as division chair (a part-time position), and when that went well enough, I was invited to serve full-time as interim dean of the College. That was a whole new ball game! It did not take me long to realize that there were whole new sets of skills (and a new personality, too) that I would need to develop if I was going to be successful at that level, and I decided, after a while, that I preferred working in the classroom to doing what it would take to be an effective university administrator. This is one reason that I resigned and went back "down" to being a classroom teacher. But the Peter Principle offers one explanation for why bureaucracies often fail to work very well.

In the military, which is an extreme example of a highly bureaucratic organization, I learned that there are informal relationships and activities that sometimes subvert, but at other times help to make the organization work better. I will have a lot more to say about my army days later, but I still vividly recall my shock when, during a field exercise that was part of our army basic training program in Texas, several of us were casually talking with the young second lieutenant who was in command at the time. One of us new recruits who were not yet fully accustomed to the formal protocols, made the mistake of calling the officer by his first name instead of by his official title and surname. "Askew," the young officer scolded but with a twinkle in his eye, "you are not playing the game." Aha, I thought. This whole army hierarchical "chain of command" thing looks “real,” but it is partly just a huge fiction. It is just a "game." As I will explain later, when we were in Korea I learned that it is possible to "work” even that huge bureaucratic system to one’s own personal advantage if one is smart enough and has the right informal connections.

Bureaucracies both reflect and contribute to social change. Bureaucratic patterns spread to many different areas of life because they seem to be more effective than the informal patterns of relationship that have been typical in primary groups like families and circles of friends. It is hard to imagine operating the U.S. Postal Service, for example, or the Fresno Unified School District, or the General Motors Corporation, or Starbucks, or almost any other corporation or agency, like a family without some version of bureaucratic organization. People who live and work successfully in bureaucracies take on some typical patterns of thinking and acting. For one thing, we learn to look out for our own best interests by learning what the formal rules are and then we become good at using those rules for our own advantage. We learn to specialize, doing what we are expected to do and nothing more, because that might interfere with someone else's area of responsibility. I did not want the teachers in Goleta to clean their own classrooms because that was my job, and I did not want them to tell me how to do my janitorial work. They did not want me to tell them how to teach their students, either, because that was their job, not mine. I was accountable to head custodian Jake Jacoveti, not to the teachers, so they were not responsible for what I did or did not do. We learn to assume that there must always be some one person in charge, to whom we will report and who is responsible for making the big decisions. And we learn to think about all of these kinds of things "rationally," not letting our emotions or traditions get in the way of getting things done as efficiently as possible.

Without even being aware of it, we are inclined to take the assumptions and ways of thinking and acting that work for us in bureaucratic settings into more and more areas of our lives, including our churches, where pastoral staffs are often organized much like a corporation with a chief executive officer (senior pastor) at the top and a series of specialized pastors of "youth" or "counseling" or "administration," all under the head pastor as CEO. We almost always assume that there must be some one person who is in charge. Even in the small congregation at CCCMB, I have contributed to some of this by working to assign the various functions in the life of the church to various configurations of committees and commissions--and then to reconfigure the organizational structures again when problems became apparent, or when people or circumstances change. As I will indicate later, the pressures to centralize leadership are strong, so more and more of the work of the church is shaped by the senior pastor. Many families, too, take on some of the features of a bureaucracy, as when marriages begin with written prenuptial agreements and marital contracts—something that was inconceivable in our old world.

Before I leave this topic of "bureaucracy," I think I should say that I have been very much impressed recently with what seems to be a growing crescendo of discontent with how many bureaucratized

institutions seem to be functioning (or mal-functioning) these days. We hear from our friends who are teachers, social workers, medical care providers, business people, farmers, and even customers that they are frustrated, hassled, and oppressed by rules and regulations that might have once made sense but end up mostly making productive work difficult, or, even, impossible. During her time at Goldensun in Arizona in 2014, Ruth experienced more than her share of frustrations in her dealings with the State of Arizona Department of Economic Security, Department of Developmental Disabilities. What might seem like the “right” thing to do to the experts who make the decisions and enforce the rules is too often experienced very differently by the people at the bottom of the hierarchy who must actually implement policies and then (endlessly) record and report “outcomes” to those higher up. Of course this would come as no surprise to people like Max Weber who warned us 100 years ago about what life might be like once rational ways of organizing social institutions were carried to their logical extremes—like being trapped in an “iron cage.”

I have the impression that in most of the institutions in which I have lived most of my life, institutional structures were still relatively benign. I will explain later some of the ways in which my army experiences were exceptions to this generalization, but I am afraid that many of the social institutions in this new world have become as dysfunctional as I thought the army was. Much of this public critique of bureaucracy focuses on governmental agencies but we have also been impressed recently that many corporations are not doing much better. We have had too many frustrating experiences dealing with large corporations like AT&T, insurance companies, and credit unions to think that they are doing much better than the agencies of the government. GM and other auto makers have had to recall almost as many cars as they have built and airline passengers all too often end up sitting in planes on the tarmac for unbelievable lengths of time, so it is not only governmental bodies that fail to function well.

There are many people, mainly in the “developed” countries in Europe, North America and around the world, who are prepared to carry the (“populist”) critique of institutions much farther than this. I was shocked to hear a demonstrator who was advocating for British withdrawal from the European Union (“Brexit”) say straightforwardly in a TV interview: “We are sick and tired of listening to experts.” There is a lot of that same attitude here in the U.S. also, including in the highest reaches of our government. Of course the scientific and technological “experts” sometimes get things wrong, but it is scientists working as specialists, almost always in bureaucratic structures, who put men on the moon, found a cure for smallpox, eradicated polio, discovered DNA, and developed our digital world. We show disdain for what they have to say at our own peril. I am sure that this attitude of disregard for

scientific expertise is at least part of the reason that the U.S. experienced nearly one fourth of the global cases and deaths during the Novel Coronavirus-19 pandemic.

It might be nice if we could simply rely on people to just use their “common sense,” or trust them to exercise “good judgment” in their decision-making rather than constructing huge and complicated bureaucratic structures and procedures pretty much everywhere. The problem is that in our diverse and rapidly changing social environment it is virtually impossible to agree on what “common sense” and “good judgment” look like, so we create bureaucratic hierarchies and complicated and ever-expanding rules and regulations as a substitute for the implicit understandings that people once shared in the old world. Few of us want to go back to an old world in which relationships were shaped by an intuitively shared “common sense” because all too often that included a lot of racist, sexist, ethnocentric, superstitious and magical thinking that oppressed many people, so the best we can do is try to make our bureaucratic structures function as efficiently and as humanely as possible. Or so it seems to me.

MOBILITY: REALIZING THE AMERICAN DREAM

New transportation, communication and other technologies, combined with large-scale, rational, corporate and governmental organizations, made possible new patterns of geographic mobility. My ancestors were part of a historically migratory people. As I have mentioned, my distant ancestors resided in Mennonite enclaves in Poland before they migrated to new Mennonite settlements in southern Russia in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—and they might have resided in Holland and/or Austria before that. These early migrations might seem like a long time ago, but, to indicate just how short the timeline of all of this history really is, my great-grandmother wrote in her journal that she remembered listening to her grandmother tell stories about the difficult journey their family had made in ox carts and on foot from Poland to southern Russia. So my great-grandfather, whom I remember meeting as a child, knew fellow Mennonites who had migrated from Poland to Russia. And before that, legend has it that my ancestors received their name because an Anabaptist family in Austria rescued an infant who had been abandoned on the banks of the Enns River and named him Enns, after the Austrian river and town--and perhaps that is how the family name began. I have already mentioned that my great-grandparents migrated from S. Russia to the American mid-west and then to California, so migrations are very much a part of my family history.

In contrast to this long history of migrations, my parents and many of my relatives in their generation were quite sedentary. Both of my parents were born and lived their entire lives in or near Reedley. My grandparent Enns' family farm was about one mile south of Reedley and my mother's Unruh family

farm was about three miles southwest of where my father's family lived. My parents lived in a small apartment in Reedley for a short time after their marriage. They soon moved to their house on K Street where they lived for about ten years and then to a farm east of town on Dinuba Avenue. They did not move again until their trips to the hospitals where they died. All three of my siblings and four of the five children in Ruth's family moved around a bit before settling into long-term homes in the Reedley area, but our personal pattern has been quite different.

Ruth and I have moved more than 25 times, sometimes to and from the same places more than once. We have worked in or visited 13 countries, many of them at the "third world" level of economic development. Karen and Mark have continued a similar pattern of mobility, living in Boston, Haiti, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, Washington, D.C., San Jose, Costa Rica, Hood River, Oregon, Madagascar, Fiji, and Yangon, Myanmar. Terri and Dan have lived in a couple of residences in Goshen, Indiana and in three residences in Columbus, Ohio, and, for shorter periods of time, in Fresno. After completing graduate school, Connie and Kevin settled into a rented house on Kerckhoff, across the street from where she grew up and then, a few years later, they moved two houses east to the home on Kerckhoff Ave. where they have lived ever since. Perhaps grandson Chris will follow a similarly pattern of residential continuity, since he and Britni purchased a home in Visalia, after living for a few months in a condominium in that city, and they have recently moved to another home in Reedley where they enjoy many close relationships with Britni's family—and others. Jenn has embarked on the second leg of what might well be a long journey, moving to Boston shortly after graduating from FPU and then to Columbus, Ohio. Zak has already moved from Hood River to Eugene, Oregon; down to the San Francisco Bay area where he attended medical school; to Riverside in Southern California; and then to Brooklyn, New York for a residency in emergency medicine. It looks like granddaughter Ali might turn out to be the most mobile member of our family. She has already lived and studied in Costa Rica, Spain, Cambodia, India and Lesotho—and her first job after graduating from Occidental College was a six month assignment in Boston and then a long-term position in South Africa.

We have observed and experienced another pattern of migration, this time not from one geographic location to another but from the farm to the city. The percentage of Americans who are engaged in farming has declined from about 75% a century ago to not much more than 1% today. This transition is also apparent in the history of my family where almost, but not quite all, of my grandparents' generation were farmers, to my parents' generation where a few of my father's siblings lived and worked in cities for a time at least, to my generation where most of us have moved to a variety of non-farm

professions. The relatives in my generation who do continue to live on farms in the Reedley area are no longer "dirt farmers" in the same sense that my grandparents were "farmers." They no longer drive horses or tractors and grow, pick and pack fruit on small farms of 20 acres or so. They have become cosmopolitan and sophisticated "agribusiness" people. Some of my "farmer" relatives travel around the world to meet with the merchants from whom they buy and to whom they sell their equipment and their produce. They are "managers" of the hands-on farm work that is done by others, often Hispanics with roots south of the border. As is true of my relatives who are in business, teaching or other professions in the Reedley area, they might not have physically moved to the city but in many respects the ways of the city have moved to them. I have not gathered specific data on this, but it is clear that the next generation continues in this same pattern of geographic dispersion, urbanization, and non-farm occupations. None of our children and only a small minority of their cousins live in the Reedley area and among those who do, only one, Jack Brandt, is a "farmer" ("agribusiness-man," really). The only farmers in our large circle of kin are Ruth's niece Laurie, married to Wayne Schrag in Moundridge, Kansas, recently retired from farming, and their daughter, Kristin, who married into a family of farmers after teaching school on the Hopi Reservation in Arizona.

One by-product of mobilities of these various kinds is that people sometimes become "rootless," disconnected not only from any one particular geographic location but also from kin and community of origin, resulting in both the individual freedoms that we celebrate and the social isolation that many of us bemoan. Of course new technologies reduce some of the barriers of distance that come with geographic mobility. An exchange of air mail letters during our early years in Japan took two weeks or more, and that was already a great improvement over the many months that were required to exchange communications across an ocean via ships that were dependent on wind power, so conversing with Karen and Mark in Madagascar, Fiji or Myanmar on Skype is a truly amazing experience. But even this is a pale substitute for eating together around a table with family and friends. I will not even begin to comment on the effect that mobility has on our sense of personal identity and how we think.

ASSIMILATION: INTO THE GREAT MELTING POT

Another pattern of change that is clearly visible in what I have experienced and witnessed in my lifetime is that we Mennonites have transitioned from being a small, minority ethno-religious group on the social and cultural margins of American society toward the center of that society. This pattern of assimilation into the American mainstream has happened to almost, but not quite all, immigrant communities over a period of several generations. Assimilation typically follows a pattern that begins

with learning the basics of American culture (including the English language) and much of this happens in the public schools, as my parents experienced when they started school as German-speaking Mennonites from the farm. The language, cultural, social and technical skills learned in schools prepare young people for participation in other secondary social institutions such as the corporations and government agencies that employ them after they complete their schooling. In these settings we enjoy friendships and other informal relationships with our non-Mennonite fellow Americans, with the eventual result that more and more of "our" young people marry outside the boundaries of the old community, and with this comes the religious diversity that is part of social, geographic and economic mobility. In my grandparents' generation, almost every marriage was within the MB community but only a small percentage of my grandchildren's generation marry spouses with a "Mennonite background" and it seems safe to predict that even fewer in our great-grandchildren's generation will marry spouses with whom they will share a common ethno-religious heritage. This typical pattern of assimilation into the American social and cultural mainstream is another part of the loss of older worlds of ethno-religious homogeneity.

Many of us highly assimilated Mennonites have also experienced considerable upward socio-economic mobility. Many of us have achieved "the American dream." We have a photo of the very small and simple board and batten house in which my mother lived as a small child (**Photo #2**) before her father built the much larger and more substantial Unruh family home that as children we knew as "Grandpa and Grandma Unruh's house." Our family lived in a relatively small and modest three-bedroom home in Reedley before my parents moved us to the larger house on the farm on Dinuba Avenue east of town. Ruth and my first residence after our marriage was a small and dilapidated house (since demolished) in the middle of an orchard next to what used to be my grandfather Enns' house. Cousin Earl now lives in what used to be that orchard and his daughter and family live in what was my Enns grandparent's home. We are amazed at the large homes and relatively affluent lifestyles to which most of our peers and their children have become accustomed. Mennonite ideals of living a plain and simple life-style (whether freely chosen or dictated by circumstances) seem to have mostly been exchanged for a comfortable acceptance of the large (and sometimes multiple) homes with walk-in closets filled with fashionable clothing, multiple vehicle garages filled with expensive cars, costly entertainment and travel, and the gourmet foods and fine wines that seem to be normal for persons in the middle and upper middle classes of the mainstream American society of which most of us are a part. Of course none of this compares at all with the wealth that some Mennonites in Russia very conspicuously exhibited (e.g.

the Reimerhof mansion with its 74 rooms or the Klassens with their four estates and many servants), but neither does it compare with the hopeless poverty of the landless Mennonites in Russia or the massive poverty that surrounds us in this country. We and almost all of our relatives, peers and offspring have learned to fit in and have found comfortable niches for ourselves in the great landscape of American society. Most of us enjoy living the middle class version of “the American dream.” We have “made it,” leaving behind the economic poverty and cultural peculiarities of many of our immigrant ancestors.

But, still, it might not hurt to ask, from time to time, questions such as: How many square (or cubic) feet of building space does it really take to provide a reasonably secure and comfortable residential shelter for one individual, a couple, or a small family? Does every household actually need its own private swimming pool? How many cubic inches of engine displacement and how much fossil fuel do we really need to propel ourselves from point A to point B in our own personal vehicles with some degree of safety and convenience? And, when I stand perplexed in front of the shelves in our local supermarket I sometimes have to wonder: How many varieties of cereal (or toilet paper, or laundry detergent, or etc.) does it really take to provide some degree of choice? It is all too easy to take for granted the material prosperity that most of us middle class Americans enjoy. It is easy to forget just how “exceptional” the life-style that most of us enjoy really is.

DIVERSITY: NOT EVERYONE IS LIKE US

Mobility, diversity and change typically bring with them a new pattern of thinking. In the old world of relative social isolation and cultural homogeneity and continuity, it was easy to assume that the world one knew was the only world there was--or at least that it was the natural and best of all available worlds. In a situation where everyone thinks and acts much the same as everyone else (with appropriate gender and age differences, of course) and ideas and behaviors are shaped almost entirely by tradition, it is easy to take things for granted. There are no obvious reasons to ask questions like "Why?" And if one does ask "Why?" one can be quite sure that some wise elder will provide a good enough answer, often with a proverb that everyone takes for granted as being true, such as “Absence makes the heart grow fonder,” or “Out of sight, out of mind.” Of course it does not take long to realize that some of these old proverbs say opposite things, so some really wise person needs to figure out which applies in which situations.

In the old world, thinking critically, or with a perspective that is something other than the taken-for-granted "common sense" that is shared by one's own community is not part of one's consciousness.

Things take on, as my professor and friend Thomas O'Dea at UCSB used to say, "a spurious self-evidentness." I remember that phrase because when I first heard it, it seemed to me to describe quite well the state of mind with which I grew up. Our way of thinking and our way of life were just "there." Things fit together, and the sense they made of the world was good enough. Some people use the term "ethnocentrism" for that kind of taken-for-granted, common sense, "of course" view of the world. With mobility and encounters with diversity come a different type of awareness that there are in fact a great variety of alternative ways of thinking and acting. There is not just one but there are multiple different ways of making sense of the world and living together in community.

Diversity is obvious in cities, where people from many different places and cultures live just down the street from one another, sit side-by-side in schools, work together in the workplace, shop together in the same malls, and sit together in hospital, DMV and other waiting rooms. This is also the situation even in small towns like Reedley where my classmates in the public schools were from a variety of ethnic groups including Koreans, Japanese, Armenians and Mexicans. Travel also makes diversity obvious. For me, visiting Korea and Japan during my army days was my first real direct exposure to communities of people whose whole way of life was very obviously very different from my own. I also discovered that what a behavior meant to me was not necessarily what it meant to our Japanese friends. I remember thinking that Japanese men must all be male chauvinist pigs because they would frequently walk several steps in front of their wives, who trailed along behind, instead of following the "ladies first" rule that I thought was the correct thing to do. I soon discovered that many Japanese thought that walking first shows courtesy and respect for women, and that expecting women to go first is what is inconsiderate.

Awareness of historical change, whether it comes from personal experiences, from hearing stories about the past, or from formal historical studies, can have an impact that is similar to direct encounters with cultural diversity. Things used to be different! "The past is a foreign country. They did things differently there." It is easy to naively read one's own experiences and assumptions back into the ancient biblical texts, but that is to ignore their original and intended meanings. The Old Testament practice of the levirate, to cite but one example, is a rule that required that when a husband dies, a surviving brother should marry the dead brother's widow. That might seem to be weird and non-Christian from one point of view, but in a nomadic herding society where every woman needed a father, brother, husband or a son to have a place in society, it made good, compassionate sense to take care of

widows in this way, even though it resulted in polygamous marriages (which were common in the Old Testament).

There are stories in our own family history of marriages that began under circumstances that violate the “romantic” notions that most of us take for granted. For example, Ruth's grandfather's first wife was the older sister of the woman he had intended to marry. The German father sent the “wrong” sister from Germany to Russia to be married to Ruth's grandfather because it was important that the older daughter should be married before the younger. Ruth's grandfather married this “wrong” woman in spite of this misunderstanding. The Japanese (and other “traditional” societies) used to say that it was actually better to begin a marriage after a practical “cool” arranged marriage than to base a marriage on an unstable emotionally “hot” romantic love relationship. Marriages that are arranged begin cool, it was said, and end warm, while marriages that begin “hot” with passion and romance often end up being cool—and too many such marriages are terminated in separation and divorce. Once we are aware that in these small ways things were different in the past, we can also be sure that they could be different in the present and will certainly be different yet in the future.

What is important, it seems to me, is that when we encounter ways of thinking and acting that are different from our own we should first make a serious effort to “understand” what things mean to the people in those different situations rather than simply using our own ways of thinking to interpret and evaluate what they are doing. It is not easy to put one’s self into the place of someone very different and to see things from that person's point of view. It is much easier to simply use one’s own values and assumptions to pass judgment on others as weird or stupid or wrong, which is one meaning of ethnocentrism. As I will report later, I spent a lot of time and effort trying hard to understand what Japanese ways of thinking and acting mean to them rather than simply basing my judgments on how they looked to me. And since language both expresses and shapes how people think and act, this meant working hard to learn to think in the Japanese language—a huge and challenging task that is actually impossible for a “foreigner” to fully accomplish. I think it was worth the effort, even though I never really learned to see things completely from a Japanese point of view. It is almost impossible to fully transcend ethnocentric ways of thinking.

When what was once unreflectively assumed as taken-for-granted is called to awareness, analysis and choice, this new type of consciousness is sometimes called “relativism.” Some people think relativism is a bad thing because it seems to imply that there are no standards and that anything goes, but I do not see it that way. I think relativism means making a serious attempt to put one’s self in the position of

another in order to see things from their point of view before making any value judgments. Reading the Bible from the point of view of one's own culture and society might be easy and emotionally satisfying but it also results in all manner of misunderstandings of what the texts really say and mean. Of course God did not actually say to Adam and Eve, *Adam, wo bist du?* as recorded in the German Bible. More controversially, of course it is more appropriate to read the Genesis accounts of creation metaphorically, the way we would read poetry or a "myth" than to read them "literally" as if they were a textbook in geology, biology, or history. I think it is well worth the effort to first try to get a sense of what the texts meant in their historical and cultural contexts and then to consider what the implications might be for us in our own situations. In the same way I think it is worthwhile to make considerable effort to understand the worlds of meaning in which people of other cultures (including our own historical forbears) live rather than to simply evaluate them using our own notions as the standards for judgment. Similarly, it is easy to think that one's present historical situation can be used as a standard for passing judgment on how people thought and lived in other eras. Seeing only what was wrong with what happened in the past--and assuming that there is no good future because everything is falling apart might be called "historicism" or "chronocentrism." If those are not really words, maybe they should be.

All of these patterns of change have major implications for how older people and younger people relate to one another. In most times and places throughout human history, people have been able to assume that the issues faced by one generation will be much the same as what the following generations will have to deal with, which means that older, more experienced members of the community could be relied upon for wisdom and guidance. But when technology, social arrangements and cultural assumptions are changing as rapidly as they have been recently, the older generation quickly becomes obsolete. Instead of older persons teaching younger persons how to think and act, cultural continuities are broken and in many respects the order is reversed. Since much of the "wisdom" of the past no longer applies, senior citizens become dependent on younger people for information and support. We see this in immigrant communities around us where grandparents rely on their grandchildren for interpretations of American language and culture and we experience something of this ourselves when we have to ask our grandkids for help with our computers and cell phones. When topics related to current popular culture, such as music and celebrity personalities, come up, Ruth and I turn completely silent. We are aliens in that world. Another side of this is that if the younger generations can no longer expect to model their own lives after the teaching and example of their elders, where do they look for

models, heroes and examples to emulate? It seems that the influence of peer groups and the media (including the internet and, especially, music) become much more important than they used to be. But perhaps that impression might have more to do with how obsolete I am than with how things actually look to the younger generations.

In the hierarchical and patriarchal cultures of the first century Mediterranean world, St. Paul's encouragement to his young disciple, Timothy: "Let no one despise your youth," was undoubtedly an appropriate corrective. My guess is that if he had been writing in our own current situation of cultural diversity and rapid social change, Paul might have added something like "and don't let anyone put you down just because you are old, either." It is as easy in this 21st century to devalue the elderly as it was to ignore the young 2000 years ago.

SECULARIZATION: WHAT DOES GOD HAVE TO DO WITH THAT?

I think it is important to introduce at least one additional term that serves as a kind of shorthand for many of the big issues that were involved in the crises that communities confronted during a period of change from an old world to a new one. That word is "secularization." Secularization refers to a process of disconnecting various segments of life from religious influence or domination. Secularization implies that all of life, or at least a lot more of it than now, was once upon a time centered around a sacred religious institution, the Catholic Church in our broader European history, the mainline Protestant churches that played an important role through much of American history, and the Mennonite church in my own more recent ethno-religious past. But secularization means that this is no longer the case. It means that more and more areas of life become detached from religious influence and control and become their own independent segments or compartments of life.

The centrality of religion in culture and society was once symbolized by the size, grandeur and location of temples, cathedrals, shrines, and other religious buildings in many older villages, towns and cities. The *Todaiji* Temple in Nara, Japan, for example, was originally built in the eighth century. It is still the largest wooden building in the world, even though it is now only two-thirds its original size since it was rebuilt after the first building was destroyed in a fire. We have visited and seen enough places in Europe and the Americas to know that the Roman Catholic cathedral was once the largest and most impressive building around. Cathedrals dominated the skyline and they were frequently located in or near the center of the city or town, anchoring a central plaza. Similarly, in many older American towns and cities, it is still easy to find the large old church buildings that were often clustered around the downtown area, or along a "main street." It is clear from the size and location of some of these grand

old church buildings that religion was once far more central in the lives of these communities than it is now. It is also clear from the condition of some of these old buildings that things are not now as they once were. Of course some are still in use as places of worship, but some stand empty and others have been converted to other uses such as galleries, museums, coffee shops and cafes, and concert venues. These days other architectural wonders most often occupy the central spaces and dominate the skylines of our cities: government and corporate office buildings.

One early step in the process of secularization was the separation of church and state to which our Anabaptist forebears contributed back in the sixteenth century. Prior to that time, the established political order was surrounded by a sacred aura. Most people were confident that kings and princes were put in place by God since they were crowned by the Church, so affirmation of the “divine right of kings” was the sacred duty of a citizen. Obedience to the government was part of doing God’s will. Disconnecting the political system from the Church, then, is one part of secularization. I think most of us generally support the notion that is built into the U.S. Constitution that church and state are both better off if they function separately. Similarly, it was once generally assumed that the church should control what happened in scientific investigations and in education, so when Galileo suggested that the earth was not the center of God’s creation but that our planet earth actually rotates around the sun, the religious authorities tried to suppress his ideas. I think most of us now agree that scientific progress will happen best if religious authorities are not permitted to tell scientists what they are allowed to investigate, what their data must show, and what conclusions they must reach. So academic freedom and freedom of scientific inquiry are dimensions of secularization.

The story of the secularization of work is a bit more complicated. For many centuries the Roman Catholic Church did not have a lot to say about the work of ordinary lay people. Being called by God meant accepting a sacred vocation, a calling out of the ordinary world to a separated life dedicated to God and service in the church or monastery or nunnery. There was nothing particularly “holy” about what ordinary workers did out there in the secular world. Reformers like Luther and Calvin changed this understanding. The Reformers thought that ordinary workers should work with the same sense of sacred calling or vocation that priests and monks did. Every Christian has a special calling from God and each person should do his or her work in the world as if they were performing a service to the Lord just like a priest, monk or nun. I mentioned earlier that my Grandpa Unruh worked with a sense of calling something like this and I inserted a comment from the life of early Anabaptist leader, Pilgram Marpeck, that indicated that for him work had a sacramental quality.

The problem was that as capitalist and industrial systems grew larger, more tightly organized, and more impersonal, they ended up taking advantage of their workers. Work became less meaningful as tasks became more narrowly specialized. It was hard for a worker on an assembly line to think that repeating the same tasks over and over again day after day and year after year for little pay so the owner could maximize his profits was somehow doing God's will. It felt more like being locked in an iron cage. So work, too, became secular again, with the organization of unions and bargaining for the best pay, working conditions, and benefits the workers could negotiate in exchange for their labor. If the contracts were not good enough, maybe things could be improved with a strike, as long as the workers stuck together. As in politics, education, and science, the church did not really matter much in this process. Some economists since Adam Smith are confident that there is an "invisible hand" that somehow guides the economic system toward progress as long as the principle of everyone seeking their own best interests is allowed to operate, so governments should not interfere in economic matters. Keynes and his disciples think there are times when the government needs to intervene, but in either case there is not really any place for the church to have much influence in decisions about how the economy functions.

One of the most important early secularizers was Karl Marx who declared that the "criticism of religion is the beginning of all criticism," meaning that changes in economic and social arrangements will never happen as long as the "opiate" of religion allows people to keep on thinking that God is somehow responsible for economic arrangements when actually economic systems are produced by human thoughts and actions, so they can just as well be changed through human action. In 1988 the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops issued a statement, *Justice for All*, that argued that economic policies should be guided by moral principles and should be judged by how well they contribute to a healthy society, especially the well-being of the poorest members, but few people with economic or political power paid much attention. The world of work had been largely secularized, taking on a life of its own, regardless of what the Catholic Bishops and many other Christians might have to say about what might be "just" or "fair."

Relationships between the sacred and the secular were also complicated in the areas of sexual and family relationships. The Roman Catholic Church has long taught that persons who are called to a higher, more holy order should not engage in sexual relationships, so celibacy was supposed to be part of the deal for people who received sacred callings into the service of the church. Christians who remained in the ordinary world were free to marry, but even then sexual relationships should be

engaged in only for the purpose of producing children. The use of birth control techniques (except for the rhythm method) is still officially prohibited by the Catholic Church because it interferes with this natural process, but surveys indicate that the use of birth control among Catholics is not actually much different from rates in the general population. Nearly all women, Catholic, Protestant, other, and none, who are sexually active have used a contraceptive method at one time or another. Sexual and family relationships are almost entirely private matters. Personal decisions about whom to marry and what to do about family planning are usually made quite independently of what the church teaches. They have been largely secularized.

In my Mennonite world, too, family relationships have been largely disconnected from the control of the church. Remember that it was just a couple of generations ago when the church dictated whom one could marry (a fellow MB), or at least whom one could *not* marry (anyone outside the denomination) and much of what happened in wedding ceremonies was prescribed by church rules. Divorce and re-marriage were both officially prohibited by the church until quite recently, but by now even re-marriage after a divorce has become widespread in practice, and, therefore, more acceptable in principle. As I will report later, the MB denomination still will not, or cannot, formally discuss the acceptability of open and committed gay and lesbian relationships, but, here, too, public opinion and the legal context are changing very rapidly, regardless of what church leaders might say. Family relationships have, for the most part, become private matters with decisions made according to personal inclinations and preferences, and, therefore, a growing majority of Americans believes that same-sex marriages deserve the same legal protections as straight marriages. To the extent that family practices have moved out from under the control of the church and have become matters of legal rights and personal choice, they have been secularized.

Churchly activities were once central in the organization of the weekly, monthly and annual calendars. The Roman Catholic Church and “high church” Protestants still follow an annual cycle of observances (the liturgical calendar) according to which every day is marked as either “ordinary time” or “sacred time,” with a year-round schedule of special days and seasons (e.g. Advent and Lent) that provide constant reminders that life has a holy dimension. Mennonites rejected much of that, but accounts of life in the Mennonite communities in Russia just a few generations ago illustrate what it meant to organize time around religious events. Sunday was a holy day, which meant not only that attendance in church was expected and that no work (or frivolous play) should be done, but it also meant that special preparations of food, clothing, and a bath should be done on Saturday the day before. Special

clothes (including head coverings for the women, suits and ties for us boys and frilly Sunday dresses for the girls) were worn for church services and Sunday afternoons were filled with social activities and food (*faspah*) with family and friends. Christmas and wedding celebrations lasted over a period of three or four days and Good Friday, Easter, Ascension Day, Epiphany, Pentecost and New Year's Day were all important events in the annual calendar. I remember hearing that these celebrations had once been an important part of life in the Mennonite communities in the Reedley area, but much of this had been lost by the time I was a child. By now church gatherings have been reduced mostly to Sunday morning worship services and, for many, Christmas and Easter only, and even then, many members feel quite free to pick and choose when they will attend and when they will give other activities higher priority. The cycle of activities in our calendar has been largely privatized, and, therefore, secularized.

I have indicated in these recollections and reflections that I grew up in an older Mennonite world in which the boundaries between the sacred and the secular were still relatively permeable. The worlds of work, education, family, and politics were closely inter-related and overlapped, with the church serving as a kind of symbolic center, or sacred canopy that held things together. As secularization has progressed, some religious communities and institutions have been resistant to the process. Fundamentalists, whether Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim, or Hindu, have tried to hold the line by insisting that the old beliefs and traditions must be preserved and defended, with violence if necessary, while modernists and other progressives have welcomed the freedom and creativity that have come with the weakening of the once-rigid old definitions and boundaries. The old world in which traditional ways were considered to be sacred is largely gone, and few of us would really like to go back, even if that were possible, though there do seem to be growing numbers of radical Muslims who are willing to fight for the restoration of an international Caliphate and the imposition of *Sharia* law—and there are some Christian nationalist versions of that. But, as I have said, few of us are really interested in going back.

PARADIGMS: MAKING SENSE OF IT ALL

A term that has been popular among both natural and social scientists since the early 1960s is “paradigm shift.” A paradigm is the basic framework of thought, the assumptions, the fundamental perspective, the configuration of ideas that we use, usually without even being aware of it, to think about what is real in our environment—and inside ourselves. To illustrate: the assumption that there are spirits everywhere and that it is these invisible spirits that cause things to be as they are is one paradigm for thinking about reality. Why does the sun come up in the morning? Why do some people experience

epileptic episodes or periods of depression? Why do earthquakes happen? Why do people die? It is possible to explain almost anything with the assumption that there are living spirits in or behind everything that happens. But then scientific discoveries demonstrate that all of these things, and most everything else, can be better observed and explained by the “laws” of physics, chemistry, DNA, germs, tectonic plates, etc. We will all be better off if we give up the assumption that there are invisible spiritual beings behind everything. It makes better sense to use a scientific process of theorizing, hypothesizing, observing, verifying, and then checking again to see whether the theory still fits the observations. That is a “paradigm shift” from one set of assumptions that make sense of our world to a very different set of assumptions.

I began to experience an early paradigm shift in my own thinking during the time I was a student at Fuller Seminary when I first read about H. Wheeler Robinson’s notion that the Old Testament reflects a world view very different from our own. In that old world, he said, the boundaries between the individual and the community were not clear and distinct. He called the world-view in which the individual does not really have an existence that is separate from and independent of the communities to which he/she belongs “corporate personality.” In that kind of cultural context, “I” does not really mean that I am an individual person over-against the “we” of the community to which I belong. There is a lot of overlap between “I” and “we.” To cite but one example, when King David said “I” in his psalms, he was not necessarily speaking only as an individual person but he was also speaking as a representative of his entire community. In that kind of worldview, it made sense that an entire family would be punished for the transgressions of one of its members because one represented all and all were implicated in the actions of each. Reading the Bible with that paradigm in mind makes a huge difference in how we understand the texts. As I will explain later, I learned a lot more about what another version of “corporate personality” means during our many years in Japan.

One way to summarize what I am doing in these recollections and reflections is that I am trying to illustrate a shift that I have experienced and observed during my lifetime from a paradigm that I am calling the “old world” to a different paradigm that I am calling the “new world.” It is easy for those of us who grew up in an old world that was still more coherent, consistent, predictable, and supportive to feel a bit nostalgic now that most of those comfortable old patterns are pretty much gone. Perhaps there is more to it than meets the eye, but Facebook “friends,” Blogs and Chat Rooms, Rock concerts and Flash Crowds might be fun, but they also look like a pretty thin substitute for what we once knew as “community.” Some of our friends have recently found that the huge Burning Man event out in the

Nevada desert can be the source of a profound “spiritual experience,” but this, too, looks like a mostly temporary and fleeting kind of thing, but maybe, that is the point. The kind of intense personal encounters and the freedom for self-expression that Burning Man seems to provide would not mesh well as part of on-going family and other social relationships. Of course there were downsides to the old world, too. Few of us want to return to the physical discomforts of the old world. Back to horses and buggies, fear of polio, and no air conditioning? No thanks! Nor do we want to return to the provincialism, ethnocentrism, racism, sexism and the rigid, categorical boundaries of the old world. We enjoy the physical comforts, the personal freedoms and the cultural enrichments that come with being urban, middle class Americans in the twenty first century far too much to go back. Twice-weekly gatherings with sisters and multiple double cousins did provide a supportive environment and a strong sense of identity, but it also placed clear limitations on how open we could be to the many other folks around us who were outside those boundaries. Ruth and I are grateful for our continuing strong relationships with our families, but we also value the many friendships we have formed with a great variety of people across North America and in Japan. There were both good and bad things about that old world, but they are mostly gone now, and few of us would vote for a return to the past, though the Amish and other traditional communities remind us that radically different ways of life do remain as possibilities.

It would be easy to list a whole host of other concrete and specific changes that have happened in the last few decades because we are reminded daily in the media about some of these things. I will mention just a few of the many changes that are enough to make one’s head spin if we stop to think about all of this: globalization of culture and the economy; climate change; the growing gap between the wealthy and the poor, both in this country and internationally; huge changes and intense conflicts in the Islamic world; massive movement of women (including mothers with children of all ages) into the workforce; rapidly changing attitudes towards sexuality, homosexuality, abortion, and high rates of living together before marriage, and single motherhood that would have been unthinkable just a few years ago. Of course all of these factors have had a substantial impact on the shape of the social and religious environment in which I and many of my peers have lived our lives.

ENNS FAMILY: RUSSIAN MENNONITE CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS CHANGE

I have described some of the ways that the dramatic social changes of the last several decades have impacted me personally, but over a period of many years I wondered about my peers who grew up culturally and religiously Mennonite like I did. How many continue to appreciate the food and other

cultural traditions that we inherited from our Russian Mennonite ancestors? How many have so thoroughly assimilated into the mainstream American culture around us that they no longer value or even remember their Russian Mennonite ethnic heritage? How many continue to hold the unique religious convictions and practices that were so important to our Anabaptist-Mennonite forbears? And when Mennonites leave behind the faith of their fathers, where do they go? How many join the ranks of American evangelicalism? How many move “up” to become members of the more prestigious mainline denominations? How many drop out of church life altogether and join the swelling ranks of the “nones” and “dones” who claim no institutional religious attachments at all? What happens to the Mennonite “diaspora” who have left their home communities and churches and scattered across the great American geographic and cultural landscape? And how might one even locate these “ex-Mennonites” who have departed from their cultural and religious home communities?

Beginning in about 2000, my friend and fellow sociologist, Dr. John Tinker, Professor of Sociology at California State University, Fresno, and I made a major attempt to answer these and other similar questions. To begin with the last question about how to find people who grew up Mennonite but then scattered, we decided to begin with a family tree. More specifically, we decided to try to contact ALL (or at least as many as we could) of the descendants of my great grandfather, Dietrich T Enns. These days many people refuse to respond to surveys, but we hoped that we might obtain a better than usual rate of response if we contacted relatives. So we started with the genealogical information that was available in the Genealogical Registry and Database of Mennonite Ancestry (GRANDMA), a collection of the genealogical records of over 1.5 million Mennonites, most of whom have their historical roots in the Mennonite colonies in Russia. We then asked members of each of the eight branches of the extended Enns family for more current information and for addresses for the family members in their branches of the tree. We managed to compile the names of 455 living, adult (18 or older) descendants of D. T Enns, but even after repeated inquiries, we succeeded in obtaining postal addresses for only 399 of these relatives. Even with four contacts spread over several months, we were able to gather only a disappointing 274 completed questionnaires. That represents a very respectable 68% of the questionnaires that we sent, but only 60% of the total Enns population that we had hoped to hear from. We can say nothing at all about the 56 persons for whom we could not obtain addresses or the 126 people to whom we mailed questionnaires but received no response, so we did not hear from about 40% of the total group.

Anyone who is interested in the details can find our published results in the MB *Direction* journal (Vols. 38:1 and 2, 2009) online so I will mention only a few of our conclusions. In the first article, we report on cultural change. We asked about several of the components of culture: the German language, foods, friendships, in-group marriage, familiarity with family history, and more. Of course we found that the younger respondents were substantially less culturally “Mennonite” than the older respondents, but we also found very high rates of positive feelings about their Mennonite cultural heritage. Younger folks might not speak German, make *verenika*, attend an MCC Relief Sale, or think it is important that their children marry fellow Mennonites, but they still think of themselves as being in some sense “Mennonite.” This is a phenomenon that some sociologists call “symbolic ethnicity.” A person might not know much about what it means to be Jewish, Japanese, Irish, or Mennonite, and might never (or almost never) actually eat the foods, celebrate the festivals, or give priority to marriage or other social relationships with fellow ethnics—but they still self-identify with their ethnic heritage when asked. For symbolic ethnics, their cultural heritage is part of their subjective personal identities but it makes little practical difference in how they actually live their everyday lives.

Similarly, we reported that almost all of our respondents remained fairly orthodox and faithful Christians in their religious beliefs and practices. Very few reported that they had left the Christian faith altogether, but only about one third were members of a Mennonite church. The great majority professed the beliefs (e.g. Miracles literally happened as reported in the Bible, which is without error; unbelievers will suffer in hell; creation happened in six 24-hour days), engaged in the practices (e.g. personal Bible study and prayer), and belonged to churches that are associated with American evangelicalism.

But what about the radical religious convictions for which our Anabaptist forbears were willing to migrate to the far corners of the earth, and in some extreme cases, even suffer martyrdom? I will mention only two of our many findings. Concerning pacifism, only 18% agreed that Christians should never contribute to war and 21% would choose alternative service if confronted with conscription into the military. Footwashing was another somewhat unique religious rite that many Mennonites practiced over a period of several centuries, but only 11% of our respondents agreed that this is something that churches should continue to do today. Nevertheless, in response to an open-ended question about how they identify themselves religiously, 63% reported that they think of themselves as “Mennonite.” Our conclusion was that in the same way that many of our respondents were “symbolic Mennonites” in the cultural dimension, a substantial majority of our respondents seem to be “symbolic Mennonites” in the

religious dimension as well, but their subjective religious self-identification as “Mennonite” does not necessarily imply continued commitment to the radical beliefs and practices that were so important to our religious forbears. For most of us, both our culture and our religion are shaped by many other things than just our Mennonite ethno-religious heritage.

I am not the only person who grew up in an old world of strong ethno-religious identity to be seriously impacted by the social changes that I have tried to describe in this section of these memoirs. My relatives and many other peers beyond that narrow circle have found various ways to adjust to the new worlds around us. Some are “conservatives” who have tried very hard to hang onto “traditional values” and the “fundamentals” of the faith. Others have simply walked away, in many different directions, including being political “liberals” and religious “nones.” Some of us who have gone away have tried to return, but with new forms of what we thought were some of the good features of the old world.

What follows next is an account of how and why I left my old home, and then how and why I tried to return to carry on, together with others, some of what we thought was valuable about that old world, but expressed in new forms that fit our new urban, modern (and post-modern) social environment. Sometimes, and in some ways we succeeded, for a while at least.

PART THREE: LEAVING HOME: ENCOUNTERING NEW WORLDS

As has been true for many young men during the last couple of centuries, conscription into the military provided me with my first real experiences of being away from my own home and the old world of which it was a part. I will reflect, next, on my 21 month sojourn in the U.S. Army. I will provide a “map” of the theological locations that were an important part of the environment through which I have journeyed, and then I will review and reflect on our many years of living and working in Japan, far distant both geographically and culturally from our old home in Reedley.

Of course “leaving home” involves more than just geographic mobility. Changing physical location more often than not brings with it cultural and spiritual change, also. As is often the case for people who travel to foreign lands, many of the students who spent just 30 days with us in Japan reported that it was a “life-changing experience.” Vicarious travel via personal friendships, study, reading, movies, etc. can have a similar impact, so it is possible to experience internal change without ever going anywhere physically. Conversely, it is possible to travel extensively without any substantial changes in personal orientation at all. Some reflections on my own personal meanderings, geographic, cultural, and spiritual, follow.

INTERLUDE IN THE U.S. ARMY: BEING A “DEFENDER OF FREEDOM”

CONCERNING WAR: WINNERS DEFINE WHAT HAPPENED

My first memory that relates to war is playing anti-aircraft defense with my cousins and friends during the early years of World War II when I was about seven years old. I remember turning some Adirondack-type tables and chairs upside down on the front lawn of our house on K Street in Reedley and pretending that the upturned legs were anti-aircraft guns that we “fired” up into the air at some imaginary Japanese airplanes—“ack-ack” guns they were called. Expecting an attack from the air was actually more than just an idle fantasy at the time. We practiced responding to air raid warnings at school, and I remember one night when I called my mom into my bedroom because I heard an airplane flying over and I was afraid it was the dreaded Japanese bombers. I cannot be sure about this, but I

think one of the friends with whom we played the anti-aircraft game was a Japanese-American boy the same age as I who lived down the street. I do remember a troubled conversation with my parents about why my Japanese friend and his family had suddenly disappeared from our school, neighborhood and town. The explanation was that the Japanese-Americans had been taken to a “camp” to prevent Japanese people who were not loyal to our country from using the radios that might be hidden in their homes to direct Japanese bombers to their targets. I am sure that for my parents and many others this was a real fear, even though we know now that it was based on fictions. Of course World War II ended and the Japanese-Americans returned from their “camps” to our town and to the schools that we attended and we finally realized that our Japanese ancestry neighbors and friends had been subjected to a grave injustice.

Like most of the students in my classes at Pacific, I never really stopped to wonder why the Japanese government decided that on December 7, 1941 it was in their best interests to attack the American Navy at anchor in Pearl Harbor in Hawaii in the first place. I realized much later that it was not because the Japanese were just sneaky or treacherous by nature, but it was because they felt threatened by an American blockade that would cut off their supply of oil and all of the other materials that the Japanese needed to import for their economic survival. Japanese suspicions were escalated when the US government moved the home base of their Pacific Fleet from San Diego out to Hawaii. Why would America want to isolate Japan? It was because Japan was rapidly becoming a colonial power in Asia, displacing the European governments and corporations that were expanding their control over much of the territory in Asia, replacing them with a Japanese colonial empire that they called The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. The Japanese had already taken parts of China from Germany. They had taken Viet Nam from France, and the Japanese were threatening to take control over all of China, to take Indonesia from the Dutch, and India from the British. So it was not that colonial exploitation was a problem. It was that the Japanese were displacing the European and American empires in Asia. So when the U.S. government issued an ultimatum that Japan must stop expanding its empire and must relinquish control over some of the territory that Japan had already taken, or the U.S. Navy would block sea traffic in and out of Japan, the Japanese government decided that it was worth the huge gamble that they took in attacking the U.S. Navy in Pearl Harbor. Their hope was that they could weaken the Navy and the American resolve to force the Japanese to back off from their colonial designs. It is unfortunate that most Americans learn in school that, in the words of President Roosevelt, December 7, 1941, is “a day that will live in infamy,” but we do not learn much about the other side of the story.

Similarly, it was not until many years later that I began to understand that the atomic bombs that the U.S. government dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki on August 6 and 9, 1945, had more to do with the politics (both domestic and international) of the cold war to save the world from communism than the public explanation that was given at the time, which was that the bombs were dropped on these two previously un-bombed cities as a last resort in order to save the lives of hundreds of thousands (an estimate of one million was often mentioned) of American military personnel who were spared the necessity of an invasion of the Japanese homeland. Actually, there was a lot of evidence that President Truman had already decided some time before that an invasion of the Japanese mainland would not be necessary because Japan was already a defeated nation. Japan's army, its navy, and its air power had all been almost completely destroyed, as was virtually all of Japan's industrial capacity. Vast areas in almost all of the major cities lay in charred ruins. Of course the reasons for both the beginning and the end of the war with Japan are far more complex than this very brief summary permits, but I do think it is important to understand how things looked to both sides of the conflict and not just the side that makes the winners (America) look good and the losers (Japan) look bad—an impression that I am afraid is created in the way these issues are usually taught in most American schools and presented in the media. The truth of the matter is that *both* Japan and the U.S. were guilty of massive crimes against civilian populations.

I had the impression that American involvement in the war on the Korean peninsula also had something to do with stopping the spread of communism, but I do not think I had any deep understanding of what was going on. I did know, however, that since 1941 all of us American males were required to register for the military draft at the time of our 18th birthdays, which came during my senior year at Immanuel. So I met with Pastor H. R. Wiens and I expressed my intention to register with the local draft board in Fresno as 1-A-O, which meant that I would enter the military as a “non-combatant conscientious objector.” My reasoning was that this was an appropriate way to balance the teaching of Jesus that we are to love our neighbors and even our “enemies” with my Christian duty to obey our government. Almost all of us who entered the military with 1-A-O status ended up in the U. S. Army medical corps.

Fortunately, this portion of my life is very well documented. During the 21 months (July 1955-May 1957) that I was in the U.S. Army and Ruth was a student at the University of California, Santa Barbara, Ruth and I were engaged to be married. During most of these 21 months we exchanged letters almost daily. If we skipped a day or two, we felt obliged to apologize and explain the reasons why we had not written. Our long letters not only recounted what our daily activities were like, but, since we were

deeply and passionately in love, they also reveal our most intimate thoughts and feelings about what was happening in and around us. We saved most of these letters in three old three-ring binders, each about two inches thick, that we called “Two Years before the Most.” They were stored in our basement or garage for nearly 60 years, unopened and unread, because we suspected (correctly as it turned out) that we might be a bit embarrassed to read what we had written way back when we were still in our late teens and early twenties. But while I was drafting these memoirs during the winter of 2013, I decided that I really should use these old letters to refresh my memory, so I retrieved the musty old binders and began to read. After an initial period of shock and feeling like the authors could not possibly have been us, I began to recognize the continuities and I greatly enjoyed the privilege of re-living a very formative period of my life. It proved to be great fun. These letters have been used to inform some of what follows. Unfortunately, the letters from the final six months of our separation are missing for reasons that we still do not understand.

BASIC TRAINING: LEARNING TO BE A SOLDIER

Since being drafted seemed to be inevitable at the time, and because Ruth and I were engaged but we were not ready to marry as young as many of our classmates, I volunteered to have my draft number moved ahead so that I would be called to military service during the summer after my graduation from Reedley College. I was ordered to report for military duty on July 25, 1955. I appeared at the designated site in Fresno, swore (or affirmed since good Mennonites did not swear) the military oath, and boarded a military bus for Fort Ord near Monterey, California. While on the bus we were ordered to memorize the “Service Number” we had been assigned. My number was 56-230-547. My initiation at Fort Ord included having my head shaved and being issued uniforms (whether they fit or not) and other basic gear. We also learned very quickly how to stand in a correct military manner, basic marching and saluting techniques, and other important informal lessons about how to survive in the military such as to avoid, in so far as possible, being either first or last in any line because those who are either first or last were most likely to be “volunteered” (e.g. “I need three volunteers: you, you, and you.”) for unpleasant tasks such as peeling potatoes or washing pots and pans. After a few days of being processed in Fort Ord, I was given orders and tickets to travel by train to Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, Texas for sixteen weeks of basic training. Fortunately, I was routed through Los Angeles so I was able to meet Ruth, my parents, and my little brother, Ken, briefly at Uncle Art and Aunt Ruby’s home in Altadena.

Because regular army basic training included a major emphasis on learning to handle and fire weapons, we conscientious objectors were grouped together at Fort Sam for a special version of the first eight weeks of basic training that did not include weapons. I think one reason for keeping us separate was to avoid the inevitable conflicts that happened when regular army soldiers and us “yellow-bellied” COs came into contact. So we learned to wax the floor, polish our boots, fold our underwear--and do pretty much everything else according to army Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) (**Photo #7**). We also received some very basic training in first aid, since almost all of us would be army “medics.” Mostly we learned to follow orders, whatever they might be (except an order to fire a weapon, which we COs could legitimately disobey—much to the consternation of some of our officers) from whomever was the latest person of superior rank (which was everyone else in the U.S. military) to tell us what to do. Since all of us were granted 1-A-O status on religious grounds, my colleagues were a diverse collection of fellow Mennonites, Church of the Brethren, Seventh Day Adventists, Quakers, a few mainline Protestants, and even some Roman Catholics. My cousin Earl was one month ahead of me throughout my military “career” and Hans Koop from Reedley MB and I were members of the same basic training cohort. I was also blessed with some other really great friends with whom we shared many experiences together—both the good and the bad.

After a two week leave back at home, we returned to Fort Sam for our second eight week session of more specialized basic military training, this time as medical aid men. We conscientious objectors were joined in these second eight weeks of medical training by a motley collection of regular army soldiers, so the whole environment was quite different, in a much more “worldly” direction. This was my first real introduction to the large numbers of my fellow citizens who had inebriation and sex near the top of their hierarchy of values. I described to Ruth how disgusted I was when it was my duty to clean up the vomit in our barracks and how turned off I was by the tales of sexual exploits that my fellow soldiers brought back from their excursions into the city of San Antonio and down to Mexico.

Since we were being prepared to provide only the most rudimentary level of first aid, our training was not very sophisticated at all. We learned to give CPR as it was practiced in those days, apply bandages and tourniquets, give injections (into muscles, not veins), hand out aspirin, and fill out forms. Since sticking a needle into a grapefruit somewhat approximates the feeling of giving an injection into a muscle, that is what we practiced on—and we gave practice injections to each other. Again, I think the main lessons were to fit in and follow orders.

One lesson that is learned early on in military training is that there are various ways to avoid some of the more unpleasant aspects of life in the army. One way to accomplish this is to leave the company area and the base at every opportunity. So with Earl and Hans and some of my other good friends, we made sure that we saw as many of the sights in San Antonio (including the Alamo and San Antonio's charming River Walk) as we could and we attended a variety of local churches on Sundays. I played basketball and softball with other guys in our unit and I even joined the Fort Sam Houston men's chorus. Most of the members of the choir were at about my level of ability, but Peter Palmer was a truly amazing musician (a graduate from the University of Illinois where he was a football player and music major) who went on to star in musicals on Broadway and in movies (e.g. leading role in *Lil Abner*).

It did not take me very long to develop strongly negative feelings about the military. On October 29, 1955, when I had been in the army for just three months, I described in a letter to Ruth my feelings as I watched my cousin Earl and his cohort receive their orders for shipment to Korea. My "humanistic" inclinations were evident even then in my understanding that there was an inherent incompatibility between the requirements of the military institution and a healthy human life. I wrote to Ruth:

This army is a thing that must be a stench before God. When (my friend) Morrow says this "God-damned army." I am inclined to agree with him! I just came from seeing Earl and the rest of his group of 99 human beings standing before the guillotine of overseas shipment—being torn from their wives of a month or so, their families, their parents, their sweethearts, their very sense of being human beings. They're like stupid, dumb, purposeless, massed and unindividualized (sic) animals! It is a pity, a shame, a crime against a person and his being, against society and the sanctity of the ties that hold civilized, rational critters together. Really, how can such an atrocity as putting a group of adolescent and young mature men in such a condition be tolerated? ...This army doesn't give a hoot about family ties, individual problems and eccentricities--they can't and still be an army. Stupid, senseless, a sin against man!

MEDIC IN KOREA: WITH THE INFANTRY

On December 9, 1955 we received our own orders for our next assignments. Of course we knew that the biggest need for military personnel at the time was in Asia, meaning Korea, Okinawa or Japan, so most of us volunteered for other assignments that might be more pleasant than spending sixteen months in Korea, which was our most likely destination in Asia. First, I, along with many others, volunteered for specialized medical training. I applied for a school that would train me as a surgical technician, but after I had gotten as far as an interview, policies were changed so that none of us draftees, who were likely to serve in the military for only 24 months, would be eligible for specialized schools. None of

us was selected. Second, I think ALL of us volunteered for service in Europe. Anything to avoid duty in Korea! On the day that we received our orders for our next assignments, we lined up in formation and an officer announced that we were ALL assigned to Korea, except that Hans Koop, my friend from Reedley who spoke German, was going to Europe. The only exception to immediate deployment, the officer said, was a temporary postponement if we had a wife who was six months or more pregnant. Which led my friend, Frank Morrow, to raise his hand and ask: “Sir: Would two women, each three months pregnant, qualify?” I do not think I reacted as strongly to my own assignment to Korea as I had to seeing Earl and his group being sent overseas.

We were all transported by train across the country to Fort Lewis near Tacoma, Washington, for processing for shipment to Korea. Ruth and my parents travelled up to Tacoma by train where we bade each other emotional and memorable farewells. We had dinner with my cousin Don (Earl’s brother) and his wife, Martha, who was stationed in Ft. Lewis at that time. We arrived in Korea in early January, 1956, after three weeks of travel on a military transport ship, which is not very pleasant at all. We soldiers were jammed together down below deck in large holds with narrow canvas bunks stacked three high on either side of three foot aisles. The mid-winter trip included some very rough seas, so that many of us needed to use the barrels and buckets that were available on deck, though the wind sometimes blew things around a bit, and since not everyone made it all the way to a toilet or some other appropriate receptacle, the stuffy holds took on an odor that was not pleasant. Since our quarters down below deck needed to be cleaned, each morning we were sent (“herded like cattle,” I reported to Ruth) up on the open deck where we were forced to spend a couple of hours. This was fine when the weather was pleasant, but no fun when it was hard to find shelter from the cold December wind and rain.

The “war” in Korea had ended four years earlier, in 1952, but we arrived in a country that was still devastated, with extreme poverty everywhere. Then, as now in 2020, soldiers from the communist north and the “free” and “democratic” capitalist south faced each other across the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), a no-man’s land that generally runs along the 38th parallel. I was completely shocked when I stepped off the back of the truck that transported us to our assignments in “Camp Casey,” to be greeted by my cousin Earl, who was attached to the same medical company as I. Earl was a driver in the medical company motor pool but my initial assignment was to serve as a medical aid man attached to an infantry platoon. This meant that I lived in a tent with eight other members of the platoon. The tents consisted of plywood floors with canvas roof and sides stretched over a wooden framework. We spent our time practicing for war—just in case “Joe Chink” (the Chinese) might decide to come across

the DMZ, about 25 miles north of where we were posted, to again invade South Korea. Should that happen, we were there to block, or at least slow down the advance of our “enemy” through a valley that led toward Seoul, the capital of South Korea, another 30 miles or so to the south. We were basically “cannon fodder,” we said.

When my infantry platoon went out on training exercises, carrying their weapons (usually without live ammunition), I accompanied them, with my aid kit over my shoulder, and sometimes with a canvas stretcher, too. The aid kit contained some bandages, antiseptics, aspirin, morphine injections, surgical knife, tourniquet, etc. I wrote to Ruth that I felt totally unprepared to actually use some of the items in my aid bag, but if any of “my” troops actually experienced an injury or illness that required more than the basic first aid that I could provide (mostly band-aids and aspirin), I would simply send them on to the nearby Battalion Aid Station, where an enlisted man who knew a bit more than I (something like a nurse), would either provide superficial care or pass the person on to the Collecting Station, a small clinic that was operated by my medical company, where two commissioned officers who were actual medical doctors were in charge. The Collecting Station included a small Holding Ward where we kept soldiers who needed a few days of rest or recuperation, or had a sore or injury that was too minor to merit serious medical attention but temporarily prevented them from performing their regular duties. This mostly meant colds and relatively minor sores and pains such as blisters, boils, local infections, sprained ankles, etc. I once spent a few days there myself because of a boil on my heel so I could not march with my boot on. More serious cases were sent to the next higher level of care, the Mobile Army Surgical Hospital (Think of the old *MASH* on TV.).

Living conditions with my infantry colleagues were unpleasant to say the least. For one thing, Korean winters are very, very cold! Our tents were heated by two old potbellied stoves that burned kerosene or some kind of heating oil, so the tents were usually warm, and sometimes even too hot because it was difficult to adjust the old stoves. But often the stoves would go out during the night because the oil would freeze in the rubber hoses that brought the oil from 55 gallon drums outside into the stoves in our tents. When that happened, one of us would have to go outside to work the hoses so the oil would start to flow again. Sometimes the water in our cloth-covered aluminum canteens would freeze even though the canteens were attached to our belts and would jostle as we hiked along on our military exercises. The ground was frozen so hard that it was very difficult to pound in the wooden stakes that held our little two-person “pup tents” in place during field exercises. The stakes would break when we

tried to pound them into the frozen ground. I can just begin to imagine what it must have been like to have to fight an actual war in those freezing cold conditions.

But we were not fighting a war. We were mostly stationary on our bases, just waiting in case something should happen. I will describe a couple of the other inconveniences and indignities that we suffered in our in-between situation. We did have enclosed “outhouses,” but our urinals were out in the open, though sometimes partially screened by a shield of waist-high metal sheeting. The urinals were made by digging large, deep holes, which were filled with rocks and then covered with dirt and sand. Six-inch metal pipes were placed among the rocks so that the pipes stuck up a couple of feet above the rocks and sand. That is what we used for urinals. We called them “piss tubes.” All too often I needed to make early morning runs through the ice and snow out to these urinals, in my long-johns and with something slipped onto my feet. Brrrr. Needless to say, not all of my colleagues aimed as carefully as they should have, so frozen urine would build up around the base of the pipes. That was not so bad, until the sun came out and the whole mess started to melt. We medics were the sanitation workers responsible for taking care of things like that. Another of our duties was to make sure that there was an ample supply of rat poison in containers placed here and there in the area.

Then there was the matter of showers and laundry. I did not take my first shower until I had been in Korea for about six weeks because the showers rarely worked and when they did they were highly unpredictable. The hot water would too often disappear just about the time one was all soaped up. So we “showered” by heating water in a hand-washing basin on a stove in our tent and we used the warm water and wash cloths to clean our bodies. There is probably a more elegant nomenclature, but we called these “whores’ baths.” Like the showers, laundry facilities were not available during my first months in Korea. This presented us with a quandary, because we were not supposed to ask the Korean “house boys” to do our laundry and the nearby stream was “off limits.” So we either did something that was in violation of the rules or we did not clean our sheets and pillowcases. My friend, Frank Morrow (of two women three months pregnant fame), finally mailed his filthy gray (from the soot from the stoves) pillowcase to his congresswoman in Washington D. C. and explained to her that he did not know what to do with his dirty laundry. She mailed the clean pillowcase back to Frank, saying that she had washed it herself and she would see what she could do about the laundry situation for us soldiers over there in Korea. We eventually had access to army laundry services, and “legal” provisions were made for us to use the services of the Korean houseboys who had been working for us all along.

Since the purpose of a military force (especially the infantry part of the army) is to fight wars, a “peace time” army does not really have anything much to do, so my letters to Ruth are filled with complaints about how much time we wasted during our time in Korea. We did have regular physical training so we would stay at least in somewhat decent physical condition (though I did go from about 170 to over 200 pounds during my tour of duty—and then I fortunately went back down to about 180 pounds before I returned home). We went on hikes and did periodic field exercises that simulated what we would do if there were actual combat. Sometimes there were classes on topics like health and sanitation. Regular troops were required to demonstrate their proficiency with their weapons, and we medics accompanied them when they went out to the firing ranges. There were *many* inspections, of our personal stuff, our equipment, our quarters, etc. But none of this really took a lot of time. Mostly it seemed like make-work, just to keep us out of trouble and to look busy, because, obviously, it would not be acceptable if we spent our duty time sitting around reading or writing letters. And, as I said, everything reinforced the basic principle on which the military system rested: immediate and unquestioning obedience to whatever we were ordered to do by our superiors

I was actually quite pleased with my assignment as a medic attached to an infantry unit because I was somewhat “between the cracks” in the organizational structure. Since my official assignment was to the 31st Infantry Regimental Medical Company (of the 7th Division of the 8th Army), I was exempt from some of what my infantry buddies were required to do. But because I was seconded to an infantry company, I was somewhat out of sight and out of mind of my direct superiors in the Medical Company.

I also figured out that there were other niches into which I could slide that would make my life more tolerable. One of these was track and field. I applied for and was granted a Temporary Duty (TDY) assignment to practice for competition as a member of the regimental track team, which meant that I was exempted from a lot of the onerous responsibilities of *both* my medical and my infantry companies during our practice times. Some of the members of our team were graduates of major universities like the shot putter and discus thrower from the University of Texas and a sprinter from Cornell where they had been serious NCAA D-I athletes, but no one was a real javelin thrower, so that became my event, even though I had only thrown a javelin a few times when I was at Reedley College and never benefitted from any coaching or training at all. The 220 yard low hurdles was my best event at RC, but the army did not run that event, and my one attempt to go over a real high hurdle (with heavy shoes on a rocky surface) in Korea ended in disaster. So I became a javelin thrower. I won first place in the 7th Infantry Division track meet, competing against other regimental teams. Our divisional team then spent several

days in Seoul preparing for and then competing in the 8th Army track meet. A trip to Tokyo for the Far East meet seemed to be in sight, and maybe even a trip home to the U.S. for the all-army meet, because my winning throw (167 feet) in the division meet was better than what most of my competition had done, but, alas, in Seoul I had a sore finger and back and we had to throw into a strong wind, which made the javelin wobbly and unpredictable, so I could manage only a feeble 154 feet for third place (The winning throw was only 158 feet.), so that meant that my dreams of glory (and my TDY) were over and I had to go back to “work.”

But there were also other things to do that provided relief from the usual busywork. I sang in the chapel choir for a time, but we were not very good. I played basketball, volleyball, and softball, but only with our local teams, which were also not very good. I once pitched a seven-inning no-hitter in softball, which says more about the other team’s hitting than about my pitching ability. We went on walking “camera tours” in the Korean countryside. I went to Seoul on mini-R and R leaves, and to Japan on R and R (Rest and Recuperation) leaves, and religious retreats. South Korean president Syngman Rhee attempted to keep more of the money that the U.S. military spent to send us on R and R in Korea instead of sending it to Japan, so a mini-R and R facility was built in Seoul. I was one of the first G.I.s to take advantage of three days in the Center and some sightseeing in and around the old capital city. It was not easy to convince myself or Ruth that I was not shirking my responsibilities in all of this, but the fact of the matter was that we really did not have much to do, especially since the medical company had sent too many (three) medics to our infantry company and we were having a really hard time even looking like we were busy.

I did have one rather dramatic experience during the time that I was the “medic” with “my” infantry platoon. During the winter of 1956, not long after my arrival in Korea, we were sent on a huge field exercise that involved several divisions, some acting as invading aggressors (the Chinese) and the others (the good guys) took defensive positions, protecting South Korea and the cause of freedom (**Photo #8**). This exercise was more “serious” than most, since the troops were firing “blanks,” so it at least sounded a little bit like a real war. Like most of Korea, we were in very mountainous terrain, and like most of the time during Korean winters, the ground was covered with snow and ice and it was bitterly cold. Pounding pegs into the hard frozen ground for our “pup” tents was a real challenge and sleeping on the ground in conditions like this was not fun, even with a heavy “cocoon” sleeping bag on an inflated air mattress. Ice would form on the inside of our tents from the condensation from our

breathing, and a couple of times we woke up to find everything, including our small tents, covered with snow.

One morning during our winter field exercise as we were climbing a steep and icy mountainside, someone called for me to come forward to help Fernandez. So I hurried up the hill to find my friend Fernandez (who was a Puerto Rican from Hawaii who slept in the same tent as I back on the base) sitting on the ground with his back leaning against a small tree. I asked him what was wrong and he just said “I can’t go on.” And then he slumped to the side and stopped breathing. The rest of the platoon was moving away up the hill, so I immediately shouted for the radio guy to come back, which he did. While I rolled Fernandez on his stomach and started to give him CPR by pressing on his back as we had been taught, I asked the radio guy to call to the next platoon to ask for my friend and fellow medic, Howard Getz, to come help. So Getz and I took turns helping Fernandez breathe while the radio guy made contact with an MD in a MASH or somewhere. My radio conversation with the medical doctor on the other end of the radio connection went something like this:

“What’s wrong, medic?”

“I don’t know, sir. Fernandez just stopped breathing. Another medic and I are giving him CPR.”

“Why did he stop breathing?”

“We don’t know, sir. All we know is that he is just not breathing and we are giving him CPR.”

“Well, keep giving him CPR.”

“Yes, sir, that is what we are doing.”

Fortunately, Fernandez resumed breathing on his own before too long (maybe 15 or 20 minutes), so the next question was what to do with him now that he was breathing. We were informed by radio that the terrain we were in was too rough for a helicopter to land, so we were ordered to put him on a stretcher and carry him back down the mountain to a litter Jeep waiting on the narrow dirt road at the base of the hill, which would then transport him back to the nearest MASH. So Getz and I and a couple of other soldiers took turns carrying Fernandez down the very steep and slippery mountainside, with one end of the stretcher up at head or shoulder height, the other end down at knee or ankle level. But, with lots of slipping and sliding, we managed to safely make it down the hill to the Jeep. We learned later that the news about Fernandez’ plight had made it all the way up the chain of command to the top generals and that the entire field exercise had been put on hold until the situation could be resolved. By the time we returned to our quarters a couple of days later, Fernandez was sitting on his bunk

waiting for us. The doctors told him that he had just been fatigued and depressed, perhaps because he had received a “Dear John” letter from his girlfriend shortly before we left on the field exercise.

To be fair, I should say that I also reported to Ruth some very pleasant experiences while out on these winter field exercises. I had this to say about what happened in January 1956 after I had been in Korea for just a few weeks. My good friend and fellow medic Howard Getz and I climbed up to the top of a ridge to talk with the sergeant in charge of Getz’ unit. It was night time.

It was cold—bitterly cold—when you did nothing. But with the climb up a hill comes delicious warmth—and an absolutely fabulous view! Korea, with its snow covered hills, iced rice paddies, a little village on the floor of the valley below us—and all by bright moonlight made brighter by the reflection from the snow is a beautiful sight! The night was perfect—still, cold, bright—the view was ideal—white, hills, valleys, trees, rice paddies making a very interesting pattern—honey, Getz and I were awed!

We were so charmed that each evening that we were out in the field Getz and I repeated this climb up to the top of the ridge just to enjoy the view.

Two months later, after another exercise of playing war out in “the field,” I explained to Ruth how and why I “fell in love with Korea” (March 22, 1956). Spring was coming and the weather was more pleasant, even though in the morning my sleeping bag was “white with ice.” “The area we were in was the real Korea—the part I did not know existed.” We were far enough from an army base, the rail line, and major roads that the villages in the area were not yet “corrupted by westernization” as what I had seen previously. I described the “little kids I saw in the villages—just like little dolls.” (In fact, I described the “cute little Korean kids” so often that in one letter Ruth wrote that she half-expected that I would bring one home with me, and she would be OK with that.) I described the houses in the villages (“made of adobe, rocks, wood, straw, tin, paper, canvas and anything else papa-san could find!”). I explained that “They heat their homes with under-floor heating. They build the floor about one foot above the ground—and build the fire under the floor. The boys (my fellow GIs) say it is really nice and warm.” I tried to describe how “kimchee” (sic) (pickled cabbage and other vegetables) was made and that “I’m told by the boys that it gives the “moose” (Korean prostitutes) a distinctive—but highly unpleasant odor.” After some further attempts to describe what I had seen, I wrote:

Aw, I give up! ... I can’t write an adequate description of the quiet, slow, hard life these people live, different from Los Angeles or Santa Barbara or Reedley or Pinehurst—or anyplace! Somehow, honey, I want to get some better idea of the way these people in the little villages live—I was so impressed I’ll bet my jaw just hung open! I don’t feel so sorry for these people anymore—in fact, I envy them in a way.

In my next letter I reported that I had found a book about Korea in the library and was enjoying reading about the society and culture of the people around me, even though my personal contacts with them were minimal.

MEDIC IN KOREA: WITH THE MEDICAL COMPANY

After I returned from my TDY with the track team, my friend, Howard Getz, who by then was working in the administrative office of the medical company, arranged for me to move from the infantry company back to the medical company into a new residence in a Quonset hut instead of a tent and to a new assignment in the Collecting Station. No more tromping up and down Korean mountains with my infantry platoon. My new job was in the Holding Ward in the Collecting Station. I was something like a nurse's aid, I suppose, dispensing medications, giving injections, keeping things clean and organized, maintaining records, etc. It did not take long to realize that there was a new rhythm to my life. There was actual work to be done! The primary responsibility of the Collecting Station was to provide a kind of triage or first response care for soldiers with minor injuries or illnesses. Serious cases were sent on to other medical facilities. We also provided medical care for KATUSA (Korean Army Troops Attached to the US Army) and the "house boys" who were authorized to work on our bases. Occasionally a Korean civilian (usually the girlfriend of a GI) would be brought in for treatment. Of course there were "down" times when we had few patients in the dozen or so beds in our Holding Ward, but there were also times, especially on weekends and around paydays, when we could count on being very busy with drunks who had injured themselves or others.

I will briefly describe a few of my adventures (such as they were) during my days of service in the Collecting Station. I was always gratified when guys to whom I had given shots (in their upper arms or buttocks) would tell me that they did not even know when I had stuck the needle in, but things did not always go so well when I had to give a shot to a Korean man with whom I could not really communicate the message that he needed to relax his muscles. On a couple of occasions I gave up and called a KATUSA to give the shot after I had bent a couple of needles on rock-hard Korean buttocks. I did much better when the MD ordered me to give a shot into the tiny soft "popo" of the cutest little three year old Korean girl that you ever saw. One night a guy came in with an extreme headache and other symptoms that the MD diagnosed as meningitis. Another medic and I accompanied him in the ambulance to the MASH, but en route the poor guy suffered a seizure and began to violently thrash around in the ambulance. It took all of our strength to hold him down to prevent him from injuring himself (or us). But when another soldier came in with symptoms that seemed similar, the MD decided

that he was faking, gave him some aspirin (APC) and sent him back to his unit. We never saw him again, so I suppose the MD guessed right. Another night a litter Jeep came racing up to the Collecting Station with a soldier who had been shot while walking on guard duty. On first examination, it looked like he had been shot through the back with an exit wound through his chest. Our MD quickly gave him some first aid, started an IV, and sent him on to the MASH. People were pretty shook up for a while at the thought that someone was shooting us GIs through the back while on guard duty, but closer examination showed that there were powder burns on the soldier's chest and the bullet had actually entered from the front. He had tried to commit suicide by shooting himself with his rifle.

Other happenings occasionally interrupted our daily routine of providing very basic medical care in our Collecting Station. A rather strange convergence of circumstances led to a number of circumcisions being performed by the two medical doctors in our company. Since all patients with really serious issues were quickly sent on to the next higher level of medical care for treatment, our doctors had few opportunities to practice their surgical skills. But they could perform circumcisions as time permitted and as they could find willing subjects. Almost all of these relatively minor (but, oh so painful for an adult!) procedures were elective, but there always seemed to be an ample supply of guys who were waiting in line for their turns, mainly because, rightly or wrongly, they had concerns about hygiene. I once reported that there were 17 men on the waiting list. I assisted in one of these operations.

I remember one case, however, that was not a voluntary circumcision. A very young soldier had torn the foreskin of his penis during intercourse (rape?) with a young Korean girl, so one of our doctors had done surgery to repair his injuries. I helped care for him in our Holding Ward and was present when the local army chaplain came to visit. The chaplain scolded the young soldier for his behavior and threatened to report what had happened to the guy's mother. "You can't do that, sir." said my patient, who was lying on his back in his bunk with his legs splayed in a highly exposed and undignified position. "I sure can. Why do you think I can't?" said the chaplain. "Because she is dead, sir." replied the soldier. It was a lesson for me in how NOT to do a pastoral call.

I felt quite good about my work in the Collecting Station. At least I had something productive to do. I was actually being helpful to people who needed what little I had to offer. In response to the positive reports I was sending her, Ruth once asked if I was interested in studying medicine after my discharge from the army. I replied that I was not at all interested in medicine, but I do not remember what my reasons were. I do not recall the reasons why my assignment changed once again, but I spent my final months in Korea working as a clerk in our medical company headquarters. One of my responsibilities

was to maintain training records. Each week I typed 16 copies of forms on which each soldier's training records were reported. This included physical training, miscellaneous classes, weapons practice (for non-conscientious objectors), etc. In those days before copy machines, I had to type each form twice because I could only produce eight copies at a time with my old manual typewriter. I had to type through seven sheets of carbon paper between the eight sheets of typing paper, so the bottom copies of the forms were pretty much illegible no matter how hard I struck the typewriter keys. I still wonder what finally happened to all of those old forms.

During most of the time that I was in Korea, we were essentially confined to our bases. Anything more than four feet outside of the barbed wire fences that surrounded our bases was technically "Off Limits," meaning that contact with the "real" Korea was essentially prohibited—unless we were out for training, or field exercises, or if we had a special pass authorizing us to do a "camera tour" through the countryside. So during almost all of my time in Korea, I lived in an American military "bubble." Nevertheless, I did manage to spend nearly two months in Japan, taking advantage of leaves-of-absence, "R and R" (officially "Rest and Relaxation," but also popularly referred to as "I and I," for "Intercourse and Intoxication"), religious "Retreats," etc. Japan had greatly benefitted economically from the war in Korea, so going from Korea to Japan felt something like going half way home.

SOME LESSONS LEARNED: FICTIONS AND REALITIES

I will list several lessons about life in our modern world that I took with me from these and many other experiences during my 21 months in the U. S. Army, and I will cite an additional anecdote or two that will illustrate each of the points that I am making. I did not think about it in these terms at the time, but the points that follow are actually variations on the general theme of the dysfunctional side of any large bureaucratic organization. My army experiences contributed to my suspicion that bureaucracies might be a necessary part of life in our new world, but they are all too often not very good for the health of human beings.

1. Official orders can be carried to ridiculous extremes. At one point a new commanding officer for our division decided that he wanted his troops to have neatly trimmed hair, so he issued an order that no one under his command could have hair longer than one inch. Our regimental commander did not want to get caught with soldiers with hair so long that his boss would be displeased, so he ordered that no one in his regiment could have hair longer than three quarters of an inch. Our battalion commander wanted to be sure to please his superiors, so his order was that no one under his command could have

hair longer than one half inch. We joked that if there were one more layer in the chain of command, we would all have shaved heads.

For a while someone high in the chain of command decided that we should identify the units to which we were assigned by wearing colored scarves that indicated our functions. For example, infantrymen wore blue scarves, we medics wore maroon, engineers wore yellow, etc. That was fine when the weather was cold, but Korean summers are incredibly hot and humid. Nevertheless, we wore our sweat-soaked scarves at all times when we were outside—even to walk across the dusty road from our barracks to the shower facility (which sometimes actually worked). On one occasion a colonel who was being driven by (Colonels did not drive themselves.) in his Jeep stopped to chastise us because we were sitting outside our quarters in our T shirts, so we were “out of uniform.” He also gave our company commander a hard time for allowing troops under his command to be “out of uniform” in a “public” area.

For a time the sergeant who was in charge of the “Mess Hall” (dining room) in our infantry company was a tyrant who seemed to take pleasure in harassing us lower ranking troopers. Along with my complaints about endless “harassment,” I wrote to Ruth (March 3, 1956):

Maybe by way of explanation I should tell you about chow last night. I could hardly eat I was so teed off! Ruthie, there were some 100 guys in that mess hall—and NO ONE was talking. When guys don’t sit around the table and talk, honey, SOMETHING IS VERY WRONG! It was deathly, oppressively, painfully silent in there! Just clacking of spoons on plastic trays and the clomp of feet as guys came in and left. Why is it that way? Because they keep yelling at us—“move out when you’ve finished eating—we’ve got to clean this place up,” “AT EASE! (Be quiet!)” “It’s too noisy in here!” “ALL RIGHT—keep it quiet in that chow line”—and on and on it goes! Every meal! Now the guys have sort of given up and just eat in the mess hall. Is that right?

Fortunately for us, this particular mess sergeant suffered a broken arm, was transferred to another unit, and we resumed our more normal pattern of noisy and leisurely dining.

2. There are gaps between official policies and actual behavior. I learned this during one of my first nights in Korea. I was awakened in the middle of the cold January winter’s night by a woman’s voice in our tent. I knew that we were in an all-male area on an American military base, so I could not understand what was going on. But soon someone shook the head end of my cocoon sleeping bag and said in a female voice with a heavy accent, “Hey, G.I., you likee short time?” I said “No. Go away.” The next morning my Argus C-3 camera, a gift from Ruth, was missing from my duffle bag where I

kept all of my personal “stuff.” Of course I do not know who took it. I quickly learned that Korean women either sneaked through the barbed wire fences, or were helped onto the base by American military “guards.” The women were called “moose.” I was told that the word meant “virgin,” but I think it was probably derived from one of several Japanese words for a young woman (*musume*). Enjoying the services of the “moose” was a regular occurrence out in the villages and even in the tents in which we lived. These poor Korean women sneaked onto the base and then from tent to tent and from bunk to bunk. The going price for their favors was \$2.00. One night during a company drinking party our tent was a kind of “distribution center” for the “moose” who had infiltrated the area. There were six in our tent at one time. They would come and go as guys requested their services. On one occasion one of these women cut her hand coming through the barbed wire fence, so I used my meager medical skills and supplies to treat and bandage her cut hand. I did not charge her for my services, nor for the U.S. Government materials that I used in her treatment.

3. There are many ways to “work” a highly structured system (including the military) for one’s own personal advantage. One illustration of this was the behavior of the Master Sergeant, the highest ranking enlisted man who was essentially in charge of the day-to-day administration of the company headquarters where I worked as a clerk. I think he was an alcoholic (like too many members of the military), but he was smart enough to know that we nice “conscientious objectors” who worked for him could be depended on to get the routine work done, so he was free to spend his days pretty much as he liked. So he would show up to sign the necessary papers that we had prepared and then he would drive away in a Jeep to spend many of the days and nights with a Korean girlfriend in a nearby village. This meant that he was technically absent without leave (AWOL), in a location that was off-limits, associating with an unauthorized person, driving a “stolen” military vehicle, and he was frequently intoxicated—all in direct violation of official orders. One night he had an accident and wrecked his Jeep. Never mind. The Jeep was hidden behind some bushes above the motor pool. Records were altered so that through his “connections” (He was a member of the Airborne (paratrooper) part of the U.S. Army.) he was able to find replacement parts from buddies here and there up and down the Korean peninsula so that the Jeep could be repaired without any responsible person ever finding out. All of this happened during a command inspection, the highest level and most careful inspection that we were subjected to.

4. There is no necessary correspondence between power and competence. One might hope that the folks who have been given the power to make decisions (since not everyone can decide everything)

would also be competent to make those decisions. As in most formal organizations in our modern world, there are two ways to acquire positions of power (which also usually means higher pay and more prestige) in the military. The first is to go to a specialized school and get some kind of certificate or license that is supposed to indicate some level of competence. In the military, this means that one route to becoming an officer (besides graduating from one of the military academies such as West Point or the Naval Academy or receiving a “battlefield promotion”) is to participate in the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) during college. When they graduate from college, army ROTC people receive commissions as officers, starting at the bottom of the officer class as second lieutenants. So these 22 or 23 year old graduates, fresh out of their college classrooms and part-time military training programs, arrived in Korea where they were immediately placed in command of a small unit of soldiers. We all saluted them when we came near enough and we always addressed them with “sir,” as in “Yes, sir.” It did not matter that some of the soldiers under the command of these newly minted officers were hardened veterans with many years of military experience, with a wealth of knowledge and well familiar with how to work the system. Young officers who were smart figured out how to take advantage of the experience and expertise of these wise old troopers who were technically their subordinates. Many young officers did not, in which case the old guys simply let the young officers do it their way.

The second route up the ladder of rank is to simply persevere over a period of time. The assumption behind the idea that upward mobility should come with longevity is that experience produces greater expertise and wisdom. Using “seniority” as one factor in assigning increased power (and pay) is common in many professional organizations, including schools and the military. Of course neither official certification nor seniority is any guarantee of either competence or wisdom, but that is how the system works. For a time the sergeant in charge of our Holding Ward was a man from the Philippines who had been in the U.S. Army for many years but had risen only to the rank of sergeant, the same rank that I held when I was discharged after only 21 months of service. More about that later. Our sergeant was an exceedingly shy man who was too reticent to give any clear orders at all. He preferred to do menial work like washing equipment or running errands so we were pretty much on our own. My coworker and I felt sorry for him and never made his incompetence an issue. We just did the work as best we could and left our sergeant pretty much alone. It was sad.

Another sad situation that I described in my letters to Ruth was that of the commanding officer (CO) of our medical company. He was a medical doctor from New York with the rank of captain. There

were two medical doctors in our company who had entered the military at about the same time so they had the same rank of captain, but since one had entered the military three days before the other, he was the commanding officer (CO) of our company by virtue of his seniority. Our CO, it seemed to me, had to find a way to balance three competing and contradictory sets of expectations. First, he was a medical professional, and, as such, he had sworn an oath to give high priority to the well-being of his patients. Second, he was also a devout Roman Catholic, which we knew from the fact that he regularly attended Mass in the chapel and we often saw him reading, meditating and praying beside his bunk in his quarters. As a Catholic, he was called to Christian love and compassion for all of his neighbors. But, third, he was also the commanding officer of a military company, and, as such, he was required to follow the orders of those above him and to order the lives of those of us who were below him. So to which of these competing demands should he give highest priority? It was pretty clear to us that his position as CO trumped his professional and religious commitments. He was a “bad” commanding officer who had no hesitance in harassing those of us who were under his command. He chewed us out for things that were not our fault (e.g. not dispensing medications when they were not available to us) and one day he was angry because he saw me in the PX (store) during duty time, not bothering to find out that I had explicit permission to be there.

One night when I was on duty a soldier came into the CS who I thought needed the attention of a medical doctor, so I called the CO, who was on duty that night. He said that he did not have his uniform on and that I should call the other captain, who said that he did not have his clothes on either, so I should call the CO again, since it was his night to be on call. The CO told me to tell (order) the other captain that he should meet the soldier, so that is what finally happened since the CO could “pull rank” on the more junior captain. The CO called us aid men in the Collecting Station “fuck-ups” because we did not always do exactly what he wanted, exactly when he wanted it. I did feel sorry for him, but few of us had much respect for our CO—nor for most of the other officers that we knew.

I will cite just one more example of how giving power to people who have degrees and certification but possess neither wisdom nor expertise can lead to disaster. During one of our field exercises, our infantry platoon was ordered by our young commanding officer to attack an imaginary “enemy” position at the top of a hill. So we did what we were ordered to do by the lieutenant in charge and we moved up the hill, only to find that he had read his map incorrectly. The “enemy” position was actually on a hill behind us, leaving us as totally exposed as sitting ducks. This means that if the situation would have been “real,” all of us would almost certainly have been killed. A sergeant said later that he knew

the officer was reading the map wrong, but it was not his place to contradict his superior. Fortunately, we were just *playing* war.

5. Powerlessness is demoralizing. I remember one very early lesson in unquestioning obedience. During basic training in Texas, one of our drill instructors ordered us to dig a hole in the sandy and rocky ground. It was part of learning how to prepare a latrine, as I recall. What I do remember is that he told us that our duty was to do without question whatever we were ordered to do by a person of higher rank. “If I tell you to dig a hole and then fill it back in, then you will dig a hole and fill it back in.” We carried this lesson with us throughout our military experience. On one occasion in Korea we were actually commanded to pick up rocks and put them in a pile—for no apparent reason that we could see other than to remind us that we would do as we were told. I also vividly recall one very cold and foggy morning in Korea when we were out on an overnight field exercise. Early in the morning we were ordered to pack up and move out. We had zero information on where we were going, or why. We were simply ordered to stay close to the soldier in front of us so we would not be separated in the fog.

This lesson in unquestioning obedience was reinforced in periodic inspections, some of which seemed at the time to be for no other purpose than harassment, but in retrospect were part of a system that was designed to reinforce the lesson of immediate unquestioning submission to authority. For example, the top blanket on our bunks were supposed to be so tight that if the inspecting officer dropped a quarter on the blanket, the quarter would bounce. For a while we were required to “block” our folded socks and underwear for inspections. This meant that we had to fold our underwear around stiff pieces of cardboard so they would look perfectly taught and smooth. A sergeant who had been in the military for more than 15 years did not know how to do this because he had never before been required to block anything for inspections. During one of the inspections of our barracks in Korea the inspecting officer was determined to find something wrong with conditions in our barracks. He finally wiped a piece of white gauze on the underside of our angle-iron bunk frames, and, heaven help us, he found some dust on his white gauze! During that same inspection, he checked my just-polished boot and could not find anything wrong until he noticed a very small pebble stuck deep down inside the nail hole in the heel of my boot. “You men are living like pigs!”, he announced—and promised to return later to find the mess cleaned up. I think that was the time one of the guys in our barracks punched his fist through the wooden door in frustration and disgust.

Of course there are many other ways to express frustration and disgust besides punching holes in doors. For one thing, we complained (“bitched”) endlessly to each other and to others about the stupid harassment that we were required to endure. Complaints about harassment was one of the most frequently repeated themes in my letters home to Ruth. Rumors are another way to respond to harassment and lack of information. In the absence of real information, we experienced an almost endless round of word-of-mouth reports of this and that: We are being moved to the Middle East to help quiet the unrest over there. There will be no more leaves for R and R. Terms of service will be shortened from 16 months to 12. The Chinese have crossed the DMZ and they are on their way down to where we are. We are being moved back farther away from the DMZ. Of course none of these rumors were actually true. But after I had checked in my gear as part of the process of leaving Korea, there was an alert because a plane from the North had flown across the DMZ into our territory. That report proved to be true, though nothing more came of it, fortunately.

Drunkenness and alcoholism are other responses to oppressive conditions. Inebriation is a chronic problem in the military, especially, it seemed, among the long-term enlisted men, but not only there. We frequently helped the drunken fellows in our barracks avoid choking on their own vomit, which, as I said, we also had to clean up. One of our periodic assignments was to do “guard duty” during the night, which meant walking a prescribed course in or around our base, protecting our sleeping comrades from whatever. One of our unofficial side-tasks while doing “guard duty” was to help inebriated soldiers find their way back to their quarters and their bunks. I discovered this early on during my basic training in Texas when I was assigned to walk night-time guard duty in the area where the officers resided. I helped three drunken officers find their way home during one late night and early morning shift.

One incident that happened in Korea and is funny only in retrospect was when an alcoholic sergeant who had been drinking too much dropped his legs over the side of his upper bunk to urinate down onto the floor, but his urine splashed against the wall and then down onto the soldier in the bunk below. The disgusted soldier in the lower bunk put his feet up against the upper bunk and propelled the bunk, the sergeant, and all up through the air, to crash back down onto the floor. The sergeant was re-assigned to a different unit. Drugs were not yet a serious issue during the time that I was in the military, but troublesome (and rising) rates of mental illness and suicide in the military are further manifestations, I expect, of an institutional system that is not really designed to be healthy for human beings.

I will mention just one more relatively harmless product of an institution that promotes powerlessness and approaches absurdity, and that is cynicism. After our time of service in Korea, we returned by ship to the port in Tacoma, Washington for processing in Fort Lewis before being shipped back down to Fort Ord in California where I was discharged from the military. We were confined to the holds down below until the ship was docked and then we filed up onto the open deck where we caught our first glimpse of our homeland. What we saw was a large warehouse with a huge sign on top: “Welcome Home, Defenders of Freedom.” The response was howls of laughter. That was not how we defined what we had been doing in Korea!

6. Politics trump privacy. As I discovered during my first night in Korea, sexual activity is very much a part of life for many men in the military. For the most part, this meant heterosexual intercourse. For enlisted men this was almost entirely with Korean or Japanese women who were paid for their services. Only commissioned officers, it was said, had access to the few Caucasian women around. I do not recall any serious conversations about homosexual behavior among the people around me. Not that it was unknown, because there was one report that two men were discovered in a bunk together in a state of arousal, but it did not seem to be something that was really an issue that was out in the open in those days long before even the “Don’t Ask Don’t Tell” policy. Though when cousin Earl and some of my other good churchy friends and I travelled to Japan and returned with stories about sightseeing and visiting missionaries instead of tales of “intercourse and intoxication” (“I and I”) the only reasonable explanation seemed to be that we must be gay.

Needless to say, problems arise when the sexual activity happens in Japan where there was a higher level of public health or in an organized brothel in Seoul where there might be at least some semblance of hygiene, but when impoverished women sneak from tent to tent and bunk to bunk to engage in sexual intercourse with one soldier after another, one inevitable result is the spread of what is now known as “STD,” or various versions of “sexually transmitted diseases,” known as VD, for “venereal disease” at that time. So, of course VD became a problem for my fellow soldiers in Korea. This was a serious issue for the individual soldier who discovered that he was infected. The early symptoms were an itchy or burning sensation when urinating and/or a milky discharge from the penis. Fortunately, in those days before the onset of AIDS, most of the STDs that spread among the troops in Korea were relatively minor (Cases of syphilis were also rare.) and were easily cured with a series of injections of penicillin. But when the media back in the USA reported that the rates of STDs among us young soldiers in Korea were alarmingly high, this became a public relations problem for the military and a political issue in

the Congress. Orders went down from the highest levels that the rates of STDs among us troops in Korea were to be reduced.

Several steps were taken to accomplish this goal. First, commanders were ordered to reduce the rate of STDs among the soldiers under their command. To make public their degrees of success, large signboards were installed in front of each battalion headquarters. These signboards used red-colored “thermometers” (as is common in fund-raising campaigns in the U.S.) to indicate the incidence of STDs for each company within the battalion, so the rate of STDs within each unit was visible for all to see. There was a kind of competitive race to see which units could achieve the lowest rates of STDs—with rewards for the commanders who were the most successful and demotions for those who were not.

Of course more than publicity was necessary to actually accomplish the goal of fewer cases of STDs, so there were several negative incentives. Soldiers who reported an STD infection could be penalized by not receiving promotions to higher rank or even losing some of the rank they already held; having R and R and leaves cancelled; extra duty assignments; and even reporting the situation to spouses or families back at home. The first logical response by the individual soldier to these threats was to attempt to keep his infection secret by arranging for injections “off the record.” Since our medical company was the only safe local source for penicillin injections, my fellow medics who actually administered the injections (and kept the records) suddenly had many inducements to declare that the injection was for some other type of infection than an STD, or to keep the injections off the record altogether. This would allow the individual soldier to receive the medication that he needed to eliminate the disease and still retain the normal privileges. The unit commander was also able to report success in lowering the rate of STDs among the troops under his command, but of course this would not reduce the actual rates of STD at all.

Some procedure was needed that would detect the *actual* rather than just the *reported* cases of STD. In order to accomplish this, our medical company was called upon to conduct early morning surprise “VD raids” in the quarters where the unsuspecting young warriors were sleeping. Early in the morning while it was still dark several of us medics would be transported to a nearby unit, where we would enter a tent (or barracks) and awaken the sleeping soldiers by turning on the lights and saying something like “Everybody up. This is a VD raid. Stand by your bunk, drop your drawers, and milk it down.” We would then use a flashlight to see if there was any sign of a discharge from the penis of each standing, bleary-eyed soldier. If there was any evidence of a discharge, we would write the equivalent of a “ticket” on which we would record the name, rank, serial number, and unit of the soldier. The victim

of our detection was then required to appear at our medical company for a test to see if he was actually infected with an STD, or if it was just a false alarm. All of this became part of the official record of the offender, and his commanding officer was also notified, so that the appropriate adjustments could be made on the signboards. Our VD raids made it much more difficult for soldiers to avoid detection. Since we medics carried a delegated authority to give orders like this, even though they seriously violated the privacy of our fellow soldiers, they had little choice but to do as we said. Fortunately, VD raids was a duty that I was not required to perform very often.

Of course off-the-record “deals” could still be arranged. Reported STD rates were very low among the soldiers in the regimental headquarters unit who did the actual paper-work to award promotions in rank. In exchange for the off-the-record penicillin shots that our medical company gave to help achieve these apparently low rates of STD for the guys in the headquarters company, our medical company was rewarded with a disproportionate share of the promotions in rank. In fact, during one period of time our medical company reportedly received more promotions in rank than all of the other companies in the regiment combined. I did not have the job of actually giving shots at the time, but I was one of the indirect beneficiaries of this “you-scratch-my-back-I’ll-scratch-yours” arrangement, because even though our first promotions (from private one to private first class, which meant an increase in salary from \$87 to \$99 per month and the right to wear a stripe on our sleeves) were very late in coming because promotions had been “frozen,” I and many of my colleagues in our medical company very rapidly received promotions, first to corporal (two stripes on our sleeves) and then, finally, to “specialist two,” the equivalent of sergeant (three stripes), just before we left Korea to be discharged from the army.

I will conclude these recollections and reflections on my 21 months of military service with a few additional generalizations. One of my dominant feelings after completion of my military career was that it was a monumental waste of time. In fact, one of the most frequent themes in my letters to Ruth (along with my endless complaints about harassment) was that we did not really have anything productive to do. Many thousands of us GIs lived (as many still do now) in Korea over a period of many years without contributing very much at all to a country that was still almost completely devastated from the war. I am sure that these things are very complicated, but I still do not understand why we could not have used our time and other resources in a more constructive manner. I did not feel badly about my choice to serve in the military as a non-combatant conscience objector, but I did think that my friends who had chosen civilian alternative service had probably contributed more positively

to their fellow human beings than I had. This was a primary reason that I had second thoughts about my decision to enter the military as I did.

My sixteen months in Korea represented a huge waste of time, not only for me but also for my many colleagues in the military. Being present in Korea could have provided many opportunities for learning about another culture and its people, but, instead, we were systematically isolated from the Korean people and I can recall almost no effort at all on the part of our leaders to help us understand the history and culture of the ancient civilization in which we found ourselves. I do not remember anyone challenging us to think of the Korean “houseboys,” Koreans Attached to the U.S. Army (KATUSA) and other Korean people (including the prostitutes) with whom we did have contact as anything other than “Chinks,” “Gooks,” and “Moose.” I know from my years of teaching experience that it is not easy to change racist and ethnocentric attitudes, even with college course work and study tours in Japan, but I do think it was a mistake to place us in the middle of another culture without making more of an effort to understand and relate to the people around us in whose interests we were presumably in their country

Not only that, but I also think that we could have used our enormous resources of time, expertise and equipment to assist in the rebuilding of the Korean infrastructure, which remained in dire straits in 1956 and 1957. I know that this, too, can be difficult and complicated because it is easy to do more harm than good, but I do remember wondering why we had engineers and equipment and the cheap labor of us soldiers available but we spent our time using hammers to break larger rocks into smaller pieces to line the drainage ditches in our camp areas when we might just as well have been helping to rebuild things like Korean roads, dams and irrigation systems. In these and many other respects I felt that I learned more negative lessons about culture and society from the U.S. military than I did positive things. I suppose everything would be different under actual situations of combat, but most military units are not in combat most of the time. Doing “good” during these “down” times did not seem to be high on the list of priorities for the U.S. military.

Another theme that is repeated in my letters to Ruth is my disillusionment with the moral character of too many of my fellow Americans. I have already mentioned the extent to which alcohol was used in ways that I thought were very destructive, and I have said enough about sexual behavior that I found to be disgusting. My letters are also filled with comments about the disrespect that I felt toward most of the officers who were in charge. I reported my impression that they tried to act in a “god-like” manner, as if they were of another higher order than us lowly enlisted men, who were almost always treated as if we were “animals” rather than fellow human beings. More specifically, I felt that we were

too often treated like “cattle” or “sheep” who were ordered, prodded, and herded around with little apparent regard for us as thinking, feeling persons. I could not understand how men who were about the same age, and about the same level of education, intelligence and abilities as many of us enlisted men could be so transformed by virtue of their status as commissioned officers that they felt free (or obliged) to treat us as if we were of an entirely different (and lower) order of being. The magnitude of the gap was made apparent when, on rare occasion, an officer would join us in an athletic event or in an informal conversation in which our common humanity transcended the artificially constructed barriers of differences in rank. I could understand and almost accept the necessity of a system in which instant obedience to orders might mean the difference between life and death, or victory and defeat, but I could never quite come to terms with the way our officers took advantage of their status to harass and oppress us as they did. The fact that there were occasional exceptions to the pattern indicated, to me, that the dehumanization to which we were subjected was a *choice* and not a necessary part of the military system. So my military experiences left me wondering about the moral character of too many of my fellow citizens.

One final reflection is that nation-states have long used conscription into the military as a way of dislodging young men from their isolated, provincial, tradition-oriented “old world” home communities and initiating them into the more modern ways of thinking and acting that are more supportive of the institutions of a capitalist, industrial economy and a central government. Like schools, the military teaches rational, hierarchical, impersonal, contractual forms of relationships that are intended to prepare one for patriotic participation in the corporations and other institutions of the modern state. But I do not think that was my response to my experiences in the military. On the contrary, I think one of the big lessons that I carried with me was that we should be very wary of bureaucratic ways of organizing people. Bureaucracies might have their good points and they are undoubtedly a necessary part of social life in a mass, urban, technological society, but they can also be very hard on human beings.

So I carried with me from my army experiences these and other influences that shaped my life in ways that were basically negative. But I also took with me memories of the Korean and Japanese cultures that shaped the rest of my life in ways that I view as very positive. These impressions and experiences led to many years of living and working in Japan. But before I get to that, I think I should make some comments about the religious environment in which I have lived most of my life. It would be difficult to understand the story of my life, and the lives of many others in my generation, without knowing

something about the theological options that were available to us. Migrations through and between the various locations in this religious terrain is an important part of my personal story, so I will provide a simple map of the territory and then I will comment briefly on my own journey from my initial religious home to new and different places.

MAPPING THE THEOLOGICAL TERRAIN

I have used several theological terms without bothering to explain what they mean, but I think it might be important to briefly describe the theological environment that has provided an important part of the cultural and religious context in which I have lived most of my life. The church (or more accurately, several churches) has been very important in my life, and theology has been one important component in my churchly life, so I will now provide my version of a “map” of the theologies that have been around (and in) me. The controversies that I will describe have importantly shaped my life. Our children and their generation grew up on the margins of this part of our old world but most of these issues are no longer familiar parts of the contexts that the next generations have experienced. In many ways that is a good thing. I am writing this part of these memoirs primarily with my grandchildren and great-grandchildren in mind, because I will be describing territory that will be outside of what most of them and their generations have experienced or witnessed. For them, this will be like visiting a foreign country.

Please understand that what I am doing is providing gross oversimplifications. Each of the theological positions that I will describe is in fact much more complex and nuanced than the impressions I will give. To elaborate on my map analogy, if this were a book of maps of the U.S., I am presenting only the first two-page spread that provides a general overview of the entire country, to be followed by one or several pages for each individual state and metropolitan area. Not only am I leaving out a lot of detail, but, unlike a real map, the locations I will describe are not stationary or mutually exclusive. They overlap and they are constantly changing their shape and shifting their positions. Denominations and individuals typically combine elements from more than one of the theological traditions that I will describe, so they are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Many Mennonite Brethren (MB) leaders, for example, describe the denomination as being both evangelical and Anabaptist—and pietism has always been an important part of the mix. So MB theology is like a triangle, or a three-legged stool, our theologian and seminary professor, Lynn Jost, and others have said.

Many observers of the contemporary religious scene note that most post-modern people are very eclectic in their spiritual lives, combining elements that once would have been considered to be mutually exclusive into what now feels like a coherent whole. Most of us now construct, or fabricate, or concoct our own religious faith (or “spirituality”) that might involve some combination of elements as varied as a born-again experience, Zen meditation techniques, confidence that the Bible is the Word of God, appreciation for both Christian rock music and the Roman Catholic Mass, Yoga exercises, psychotherapy, a strong sense of appreciation for nature, and maybe admiration for a guru (or two) of one type or another. I will say more about this later, but most of us in our new world are religious “tinkerers,” taking bits and pieces from this tradition and that to construct something that “works for me.” Perhaps developing one’s own “spirituality” might be better than having a religious faith that is inherited or imposed from the outside but is not really personally “authentic.” I will mention later that Japanese author Endo Shusaku always felt like his adopted Christian faith was foreign to him as a Japanese person, like a ready-made suit that did not really fit, he said. I inherited one version of Christianity, too, and I have spent a lot of time trying to figure out both how to make it fit AND how I fit into it.

Unlike the eclectic spirituality that is characteristic in our new world, I have lived a significant part of my life in the context of theological systems that included clearly defined boundaries. There was “truth” and there was “error.” Right and wrong were not the same and the differences seemed to be worth fighting about. One could be “in” as a Christian or one could be “out,” like a Buddhist or Muslim, but not both at the same time. At least some of the categories were clear and they were mutually exclusive.

I will begin with the religious situation of the Mennonites in Russia. Then I will describe the situation my Russian Mennonite immigrant ancestors encountered here in America and I will describe where many found their religious homes. Finally, I will describe some of the locations I have occupied on my own journey through this theological landscape. I hope to make it clear that both I personally and the religious environment around me (including the various kinds of Mennonites) have changed during my life time. We have all changed a lot!

MENNONITES IN RUSSIA: “TRADITION, TRADITION!”

There are, of course, a great variety of understandings and interpretations of what Christianity is all about. Already in Russia our Mennonite ancestors were exposed to a variety of theological influences. For many Mennonites in Russia, religion was a central part of their culture and their social organization. As with Tevye in *Fiddler on the Roof*, their Mennonite religion was part of their “Tradition! Tradition!”

But not everyone simply accepted all of the traditions as they were handed down from generation to generation. Even in Russia during the early part of the nineteenth century, an influential Mennonite leader named Johann Cornies (b. 1789) introduced many innovations into the Mennonite communities. He introduced new crops and new farming techniques. He organized schools with a standardized curriculum. He advocated particular ways of designing buildings and organizing the villages. Cornies encouraged Mennonites to be more rational and efficient in their lives together. In other words, he wanted the Mennonites to be more “modern.” So even in the Mennonite colonies in Russia two hundred years ago, many things were changing. Not everyone willingly accepted these changes, of course. In one village the locals planted the young trees that were sent as part of a forestation project upside down, with the leaves in the ground and the roots sticking up in the air, as a way of expressing their resistance to what Cornies instructed them to do.

In this changing social, economic and cultural environment in Russia, there were also those who were discontent with the state of the religious dimensions of their Mennonite communities. For many, the traditional religious ideas and practices no longer seemed to fit. If the old ways of farming and educating children were not good enough, then maybe the religious traditions were not good enough, either. And there really were problems in the Mennonite communities in Russia in those days. For one thing, political and religious leadership had become all mixed up together. Contrary to the convictions of the early Anabaptists that church and state should be independent of each other, the Mennonites in the colonies were largely responsible for their own governance, including providing policing of their communities. So the mayors had a lot of power in the churches. There was apparently a lot of drunkenness connected with community celebrations and it did not seem to be a problem if ministers (who were often selected by chance through a kind of lottery system) were also alcoholics. My great-great-grandfather Unruh was reportedly both a Mennonite minister in Russia and an alcoholic. Old sermons were often read and re-read by ministers who might have been selected by lot and seemed to be mostly going through the motions of carrying on the traditions. Baptism and church membership were more like automatic rites-of-passage that came after memorizing the proper answers to a standardized series of questions (catechism), often as a kind of prerequisite to marriage, than matters of personal understanding and conviction. Since only members of the church were permitted to own property or vote, there were strong secular as well as religious motivations for joining the church. All of this was quite different from the vision of Christian faith and life that Menno Simons and the early

Anabaptists had taught and lived, and there were people in and around the Mennonite communities in Russia who were advocating something quite different from the religious status quo.

PIETISM: PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

Some of the Mennonite ministers and teachers who went to Germany or Switzerland to study were exposed to a movement within European Protestantism known as “pietism” that advocated a more intentional and emotional approach to the Christian life than simply following the inherited traditions. Pietists emphasized the importance of making an informed personal commitment to Christian faith (“conversion,” or being “born again”) and they taught that the Holy Spirit would lead a person through the disciplines of personal Bible reading and prayer to a more holy life. They encouraged people to meet in small groups for Bible study and prayer. They were confident that a more ethical life of honesty, self-control, and service to others would result from these spiritual practices. Not only did some of the Mennonite ministers advocate a more pious approach to the Christian life than was common in the Mennonite communities in Russia in those days, but a pastor named Edward Wuest from a nearby German Lutheran community was a frequent guest in the Mennonite churches in Russia. He, too, preached a pietistic message, as did some German Baptist ministers who were also guests in the Russian Mennonite communities.

As had happened in the great revival movements in North America, pietism inspired a significant “revival” movement within the Mennonite communities in Russia. Members of the community who experienced a sense of spiritual renewal in their own personal lives through the teachings and practices of pietism became increasingly discontent with what they saw as the compromised nature of the religious life that was common in their communities, so they began to meet together separately for Bible study and prayer. They became convinced that the teachings of pietism and the original faith of their Anabaptist forbears (“Our beloved Menno”) were very similar. Of course these more zealous practitioners of the Christian life eventually came into conflict with the more traditional “establishment” leadership of the Mennonite communities over issues such as baptism and communion, but there were also political problems related to relationships with the host Russian government.

The Russian government, understandably, wanted to deal with only one, not multiple Mennonite organizations, but in 1860 there was a major split within the ranks of the Mennonites in Russia. The dissident, more pietistic group became known as “the Brethren” and this group was finally organized separately as the Mennonite Brethren. This became the denomination with which I and many of my ancestors have been affiliated for more than 150 years. The larger, more traditional group that did not

agree that radical changes were necessary was known as the “churchly” Mennonites in Russia. After their migration to the U.S. many of these “churchly” folks became part of the General Conference (GC) Mennonites, an association of American Mennonite congregations that organized in 1860 to cooperate in programs such as education and missions. That is the denomination with which Ruth’s family has been associated since their arrival in the U.S. in 1911. Relationships between MB and GC Mennonites were sometimes cordial, as is illustrated by the fact that Ruth’s grandfather, a leader in the “churchly” Mennonite community in Russia and a member of the GC congregation in Reedley, was one of the first teachers in the MB German Bible School in Reedley (and my MB great-grandparents were also neighbors and good friends with Ruth’s GC grandparents), but there were also many tensions and conflicts and a lot of mutual suspicion—and there still are.

When the Russian Mennonites arrived in the U.S., they found a religious situation that was very diverse. Their initial impulse was to try to replicate the kind of separate religion, culture and society that they had once known in Poland and then in Russia, where the governments had granted them a series of “privileges” that included operating their own schools, exemption from military service, relief from certain kinds of taxes, and many other things. They were initially determined to maintain their Dutch and German language and culture in America as they had succeeded in doing during their sojourn in Poland and then again in Russia—for a time, at least. To support these efforts, many Mennonite communities in North America, including the MBs in Reedley, established German language Bible Schools to supplement the education that the younger generations were receiving in the public schools. But the attractions of the American “melting pot” were very strong. It quickly became clear that isolation would not work any more effectively for the Mennonites than it had for many other European immigrant communities, so choices had to be made concerning what kinds of Americans the Mennonites would become.

As I have said, the situation in America was highly pluralistic. In this very brief summary, I will not say much about the Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Pentecostal and many other versions of Christianity, since those were not really serious options for most Mennonites in America. Mennonites had been part of the larger Reformation movements in Europe during the sixteenth century, so they were firmly identified with many of the main tenets of Protestantism. During the 19th century, serious tensions arose between the more conservative (pietistic) and the more liberal factions within most of the major Protestant denominations in the U.S., and by the 1920s the situation had become openly conflicted, with serious divisions between the more conservative evangelicals and fundamentalists on

the “right” and the more liberal modernists on the “left.” The Scopes “Monkey Trial” in 1925 over the teaching of evolution in public schools was one watershed incident in these conflicts.

EVANGELICALISM AND FUNDAMENTALISM: TRUTH AND ERROR

The word “evangelical,” which has been used by most of the churches and denominations with which I have been affiliated, is derived from a Greek word that means “good news,” or “gospel” as it was translated into Old English. Fundamentalism was a movement within the larger evangelical community. The term fundamentalism originated in the early years of the twentieth century when a series of small books were published under the title “The Fundamentals.” These books attempted to spell out exactly what one must believe if one is to be a real Christian. They argued, for example, that anyone who is truly a Christian believes that Jesus’ mother was a virgin; that the miraculous stories reported in the Bible were actual, physical, historical events; that Jesus physically rose from the dead; and that someday in the future Jesus will physically return to the earth. The whole system was based on the conviction that these ideas are clearly taught in the Bible, which should be taken as literal, for the most part at least, and that the original manuscripts of the Bible were free from any errors at all. This is part of a perspective on the Bible that is known as “inerrancy.”

The idea of inerrancy includes the conviction that the texts of both the Old and New Testaments in the Bible are entirely “true,” meaning that these texts are not only reliable guides to faith and life, but that the original manuscripts were free from any errors. This includes all references to specific historical dates and numbers (e.g. Methuselah actually lived to be 960 years old.) and in their accounts of natural phenomena (e.g. The sun stood still.). Of course this also includes the biblical narratives of how creation happened and the many reports of miraculous events that clearly violate the “laws” of nature. This conviction that the Bible is entirely free from any errors is a necessary prerequisite for Christian faith, the fundamentalists believed, because if the Bible is in error in even one small detail, then how can one be sure that it is not in error in many other more important points as well? Without this foundational confidence that the Bible contains no errors (at least in the original manuscripts), the fundamentalists were convinced, Christian faith is built on shaky ground.

Related to the notion of inerrancy is another conviction that, in previous eras, was expressed in the phrase “perspicuity of scriptures.” Perspicuity means “plain to the understanding.” It means having confidence that the plain meanings of the biblical texts can be understood by anyone who is literate, has access to the text in a familiar language, has a right attitude, and uses common sense. The Bible can speak directly to the reader in her/his real, immediate circumstances. For the sixteenth century

Protestant reformers, this meant that the Bible should be translated into the vernacular languages and distributed as widely as possible so that everyone would be able to directly read, understand, and follow the biblical message themselves. The Roman Catholic Church of that era rejected this idea because they were sure that this would lead to all manner of misinterpretations and aberrations in understandings of what the Christian faith is all about. The “teaching office” of the Church is necessary to guard against heretical misinterpretations of the Bible. Perspicuity of the scriptures is an important component of evangelical and fundamentalist versions of Christianity because it is part of what “the priesthood of believers” is all about. Official pronouncements by the church and the historical and literary complications introduced by scholars are not necessary. In fact, they can stand in between the reader and the text and interfere with the believer’s receipt of the messages of the Bible. In words that found their way into a song during the 1960s: “The Bible says it. I believe it. That settles it.”

For the fundamentalists, inerrancy became one of the major issues that distinguished them from others because they considered belief in inerrancy to be a basic test for Christian faithfulness. And many of the fundamentalists believed that it was a mistake for folks who shared these beliefs that they considered to be foundational to true Christianity to remain “in fellowship” as members in groups that included people who did not share these same convictions, so the fundamentalists did not hesitate to withdraw from their congregations and denominations in order to establish their own separate congregations, denominations, and institutions such as schools, seminaries, and mission programs. In recent decades several other issues have been used by fundamentalists as “boundary markers” to determine who is “in” and who is “out.” Among these defining issues are women in church leadership, abortion and homosexual relationships. Fundamentalists have found a great affinity with conservative Republican politics, so there are few progressive Democrats to be found in fundamentalist circles. It is pretty much impossible to understand the culture wars that have raged in the U.S. in recent decades without an understanding of where the fundamentalists were coming from, and it is difficult to understand my spiritual and cultural journey without knowing that I grew up in an environment that was strongly shaped by fundamentalism. More about this in a final digression.

MODERNISM: MAKING PEACE WITH SCIENCE

One way to understand some of the major divisions within Protestantism is that the various movements represented different responses to the newly emerging “modern” world. Some Christians were willing to accept what the modern world had to offer and they attempted to use the insights of modernity to illuminate their religious understandings and practices. So, for example, the more “liberal” folks

accepted the methods and insights of science, including the conclusion that the theory of evolution provides the best available explanation for the many varieties of plant and animal life of which we humans are a part, and that the whole cosmos originated about five billion years ago with some sort of “Big Bang.” These modernists were willing to adjust their understandings of the biblical accounts of creation to the data and explanations that science provided. The modernists were willing to do this because they also accepted the notion that the biblical texts should be interpreted within their own historical and literary contexts. The creation accounts in the Bible, they pointed out, were not intended to answer modern scientific questions about cosmology, geology or biology. The Bible was not written like a textbook, an encyclopedia, a dictionary, or an owner’s instruction manual, so it should not be read that way. The texts have contexts, and those contexts should shape our understandings of the messages the texts were intended to convey. Understanding the “conditions of their production” is essential to proper interpretations of the biblical texts.

For example, the creation texts in the Old Testament book of *Genesis* were most likely written to counter the “truths” that were represented in the creation stories (myths) of the other cultures around them at the time the biblical texts were compiled. There was a lot of evidence that the Old Testament literature traditionally known as the “Five Books of Moses,” was actually compiled and edited over a period of many centuries, long after the time of the historical Moses (if there really was one historical Moses) and this includes the biblical creation accounts. So, if we want to know what these ancient texts really mean, we need to understand what they meant to the original authors, their editors and compilers, and to their readers in their own historical and literary contexts. The accounts of the miracles of Jesus in the New Testament, similarly, should be read for the deeper meanings that they represented in the first century and not necessarily as literal descriptions of objective physical happenings. Whether Jesus actually chemically turned water into wine during a wedding celebration, or rose from his grave with a transformed material body are not as important as what these stories meant to their authors, compilers and readers in the first century CE Greek, Roman, and Jewish communities. These miracle stories should be read as “signs,” as “acted-out parables” that point to deeper spiritual truths. The modernists were people who adopted this posture of openness to scientific and critical thinking. They were found mostly in the “mainline” Protestant denominations such as many of the Methodists, Congregationalists, Presbyterians, and Lutherans and in the colleges, seminaries and other institutions operated by these denominations.

Fundamentalists rejected modernity as represented in the insights offered by science (including the theory of evolution) and in much of the literary criticism of the Biblical texts. Since they insisted that Christian faith must be based on a Bible that is entirely free from any error, factual or otherwise, and that the Bible should be read literally, then if the biblical creation story says that God created everything within a period of six days (of 24 hours each, presumably), and if the chronologies in the Bible are added up to indicate that this happened some 6000 years ago, then, obviously, the evolutionary narrative must be rejected. If the New Testament says that Jesus miraculously walked on water and healed blind people with mud made from his saliva, then that is exactly what happened. The events that are reported in the Bible could have been recorded digitally if the technology had been available.

An extreme version of this kind of literalism was exhibited by a classmate of mine in Immanuel. He was one of many people who are still convinced that the earth cannot possibly be shaped like a sphere because in several places the Bible refers to the “four corners” of the earth and spheres do not have four corners. Only an earth that is flat can have corners, so, if this is true, then it is necessary to construct all kinds of convoluted explanations for why the earth just *looks* like a ball when viewed from space (though, when one begins with these kinds of conclusions, then the reality of the whole phenomenon of space exploration might be open to question, too).

For modernists (and neo-evangelicals whom I will introduce a bit later), this literalistic way of reading the Bible does a great injustice to the texts themselves because they were not written to be read that way. To use the *Genesis* creation stories (or myths, actually, since a myth is a story that explains why things are as they are, and how they came to be that way) to prove that biological evolution never happened is to entirely miss the point that the original authors were trying to make in their time and place. And that is where we need to begin if the Bible is to have any meaningful significance in our own time and place. We will miss the point if we impose our own literal meanings on these ancient texts, just as we will never “get it” if we try to interpret a joke or read poetic metaphors literally. My “love” is not literally “like a red, red rose,” as we sang in our men’s glee club at Reedley College.

I mentioned that positions on abortion and homosexuality were points of conflict between the conservative fundamentalists and the liberal modernists, but there were disagreements over a whole cluster of other ethical issues, too, including attitudes toward the war in Viet Nam, the civil rights movement, the women’s liberation movement, the United Farm Workers’ union, Native Americans, the “war on poverty,” Senator McCarthy’s campaign against “godless communists,” a Roman Catholic in the White House, and, even, the moral relativism of the social sciences. Conservatives wanted to

protect the unique “American way of life” from the challenges of diversity, including a campaign during the 1940s to add an amendment to the Constitution declaring that the U.S. is a “Christian nation.” Conservatives tended to view social issues such as racism, sexism, and poverty as matters of individual attitudes and behavior best remedied through personal spiritual transformation, while liberals saw these social problems as legal and systemic problems requiring governmental intervention to change how the institutional structures of our society are put together. Similarly, many conservatives see no point in passing gun control legislation because gun violence begins in the sinful hearts of fallen persons. So the slogan became “Guns don’t kill people. People do.”

Needless to say, the modernists and the fundamentalists did not get along very well. Many modernists thought the fundamentalists were ignorant, simple-minded country hicks and many fundamentalists did not think the modernists were even Christians. Modernists controlled their institutions and the fundamentalists eventually built many of their own. Many Baptists, Pentecostals and a host of other smaller, more independent groups that went by names that often included terms like “Bible,” “Fellowship,” “Community,” and “Neighborhood” were associated with fundamentalism. Bob Jones University, John Brown University and many Bible schools and institutes such as the Moody Bible Institute and the Bible Institute of Los Angeles (now Biola University) are examples of fundamentalist institutions. But there were conflicts within denominations, too. Many denominational leaders tended to be more liberal than the folks in the pews, leading to serious battles within many of the major denominations in the U.S. One thing that often happened was a dramatic reduction in financial support and, therefore, reductions in staffs and programs in most of the main-line denominations because the more conservative members did not support what their more liberal denominational leaders were trying to do. In the U.S., Episcopalian, Methodist, Mennonite (MCUSA) and other denominations have experienced major splits and numerous defections over these issues.

I am focusing on the Protestant part of the theological map, but I should also mention that there were parallel struggles going on in the Roman Catholic world as well. I recently re-read *The Catholic Crisis*, written in 1968 by my Roman Catholic professor and friend, Dr. Thomas O’Dea, in which he analyzed what happened in the Second Vatican Council that was convened by two popes during the years 1962-1965. The bishops of the church met in Rome to try to figure out how their church should respond to the issues raised by the changes that were happening in culture and society. For the most part, they rejected the traditional defensive, fundamentalistic responses of the church in favor of a much more open and liberal *aggiornamento*, or “bringing up to date.” Of course Vatican II did not really resolve

all of the issues, since the same old conflicts re-appear each time major policy decisions are made or a new pope is selected. It was not only Mennonites and other Protestants who experienced religious crises in their encounters with the modern world.

So when the Mennonite immigrants from Russia realized that they would not be able to remain as culturally and religiously separate in America as they had once been in Poland and then in Russia, they needed to decide what kind of Christians they would become. Some of the “churchly” Mennonites made every effort to avoid taking sides in these modernist-fundamentalist controversies. They hoped to serve as a peace-making, reconciling influence somewhere above the fray. But in each of the Mennonite denominations there were also factions who sided with the fundamentalists and attacked any fellow members who they thought might be modernists. These conflicts led to the firing of several Mennonite college presidents, the temporary closing of some of the suspect colleges (including the MB Tabor College), and the organization of new schools (including the establishment of the Pacific Bible Institute that became FPU) and other institutions. The MBs moved decisively to the “right,” joining with many other conservatives as members of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) when it was organized in 1942, incorporating fundamentalist language into some of the MB confessions of faith and literature, and affiliating closely with fundamentalist organizations and institutions. For example, the Pacific Bible Institute that was the predecessor of Fresno Pacific University was a member of an association of fundamentalist Bible Institutes. When I joined the faculty at Pacific in 1970, the “Confession of Faith” in the school catalog was still a fundamentalist document.

DISPENSATIONALISM: PREPARING FOR THE AGE TO COME

I cannot complete my map of theological positions without identifying several additional locations. Most of the original MB missionary staff who had been sent to Japan took with them a dispensational theology. Dispensationalism was one particular version of conservative evangelicalism and fundamentalism that first became popular in England in the late nineteenth century. Dispensationalists saw in the Bible a series of seven distinct “ages” or “dispensations.” Each of these seven periods of history was characterized by a particular way in which God related to His people. So, for example, God revealed to Moses the Ten Commandments and the 613 laws that should govern the behavior of the people of Israel as God’s uniquely “chosen people.” Thus began a period, or “dispensation,” of “law.” But the Jewish people failed to follow the laws that God had given to them and they rejected the prophets whom God sent to call them back to His way, so God ended that dispensation and began a new one. Nevertheless, the Jewish people continue to occupy a special place in how God deals with

humankind. All of the nations of the earth will one day be judged on the basis of how they have treated the nation of Israel. Because of this conviction, fundamentalists and dispensationalists are among the strongest supporters of the Zionists within the Israeli government. They were well represented in the delegations that celebrated the relocation of the U.S embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem in 2018.

According to the dispensational interpretation, during this present time we live in an age of “grace.” This means that even though we know that we are sinful people and we will not be able to live perfectly as God intended, God has provided a way for our sins to be forgiven through the death of Jesus. All we can do in this age is confess our sins, believe that we are forgiven by the grace of God through the substitutionary, atoning death of Jesus, and share this Gospel (good news) message with others so they, too, can be saved from eternal separation from God and suffering in hell. It will not always be this way, though, because Jesus will one day come again and establish a new dispensation. In this new age that is yet to come, the teachings of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount and elsewhere about loving our neighbors as we love ourselves will finally be acted out, but they do not apply during this current age of grace.

The details of the “end times” (eschatology) are matters of some debate within the evangelical world but the sequence is clearly laid out in the dispensational interpretation, which includes the conviction that there will be a literal “millennium,” a one thousand year period of time during which Jesus will be the governing ruler over all of the nations of the earth. Dispensationalists believe in “premillennialism.” That is, Jesus will return *before* the beginning of the 1000 year (millennium) reign of Jesus. Included in this way of thinking is the belief that current social conditions are hopelessly mired in sin and are beyond repair, so the primary task of the church is to redeem as many souls from hell as possible before Jesus comes again. An alternative position (“postmillennialism”) is that the church is called to act now in imitation of the ministries of Jesus, to initiate a world of love and justice in the midst of the many social problems around us. Of course there are also “amillennialists” who believe that biblical references to a 1000 year reign of Christ should be read metaphorically rather than literally, so there will be no literal, 1000 year “millennium” at all. Of course from the premillennial point of view, amillennialists and postmillennialists look like nothing more than liberals and “social-gospel dogooders.” I will not even mention the controversies over the timing of the “rapture” and the period of the “tribulation,” the identity of the “beast” and the “anti-Christ,” or the significance that the restoration of the Jewish people to Palestine or the designation of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel might have for

the timing of the “end of the age,” but all of that is included in the debates about eschatology within the world of fundamentalism and dispensationalism.

Of course the whole system of dispensationalism is a lot more complicated than just this, but perhaps this is enough to indicate that dispensationalism and fundamentalism have a lot in common. For one thing, both were convinced that true Christians should not have anything to do with the modernists. The dispensationalists built their own schools such as the Bible Institute of Los Angeles (now Biola University) and Dallas Theological Seminary in Texas. The MB Pacific Bible Institute and the MB seminary (MBBS) were founded as dispensationalist institutions. As I said, dispensationalism served as the primary theological foundation for the early MB mission in Japan and the Japan Mennonite Brethren Conference (JMBC) that grew out of that mission. Harry Friesen, MB missionary leader in Japan, received his doctorate from Dallas Theological Seminary and his disciple and successor as president of the MB seminary in Japan, Manabe Takashi, carried on in this same tradition, though Manabe-sensei advocated a modified version of dispensationalism that he called “progressive dispensationalism.” By the late 1960s MB leadership in North America had mostly moved away from dispensationalism and by 2017, the JMBC had moved almost entirely away from its dispensationalist origins. But all of these issues were matters of serious controversy in the world in which I grew up and, as I will report, during our early years of service in Japan.

NEO-EVANGELICALISM: BETWEEN FUNDAMENTALISM AND MODERNISM

“Neo-evangelicals” tried to create an alternative to both modernism and fundamentalism. Like the fundamentalists, they wanted to take the Bible and historic Christianity more seriously than many modernists did, but they did not reject out of hand the insights of modern science and critical analyses of the biblical texts like most fundamentalists did. In fact, they thought that the insights of modernity might well be helpful in understanding and applying the teachings of the Bible and historic Christian faith. They were confident that scholarship and Christian piety were not only compatible, but they could be mutually enriching. Scientific discoveries could deepen one’s understanding of the Creator God and could be useful in serving our neighbors, and using some of the tools of literary criticism could help reveal deeper layers of truths about the Bible. Examples of neo-evangelical schools and institutions are Wheaton College near Chicago, Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California, the journal *Christianity Today* and the global relief agency, World Vision. Many evangelical denominations, institutions and individuals cooperate in the organization called the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE). Billy Graham, the famous evangelist, began as a fundamentalist,

but was later revered as a kind of patron saint of the neo-evangelical community. But, as I said, fundamentalists, dispensationalists, and various kinds of evangelicals had a very hard time getting along with each other, to say nothing of conflicts with the liberals and modernists.

Fuller Theological Seminary where I studied during the years 1959-62 became a neo-evangelical institution that still maintained strong elements of both pietism and fundamentalism while I was a student there. It was exciting for me to study under faculty and with fellow students who were both competent and honest scholars *and* dedicated, pious Christians. A couple of incidents from my days at Fuller will illustrate something of the nature of the controversies that were an important part of the religious environment at that time, even though they seem pretty remote from the current situation. Dr. Edward John Carnell was probably the faculty member at FTS for whom I and many of my fellow students had the greatest respect. He was a very intelligent and learned man, with a Ph.D. from Harvard, recently appointed to the presidency of the seminary, and he was also a very proper New England gentleman. He was selected to author *The Case for Orthodox Theology* in a series of books that introduced three major Protestant theological positions that were important in those days: evangelicalism (orthodoxy), neo-orthodoxy, and liberalism. Carnell's book was published in 1959, the year I entered FTS. In retrospect, most of what he had to say was quite conservative, with a very high view of the importance of the Bible and the best insights of the historic creeds of the church and the teachings of the Protestant Reformers, but Dr. Carnell had little regard for the fundamentalists and dispensationalists with whom he was actually quite close on many theological issues. He criticized them in a chapter in his book in which he described the "Perils" with which orthodoxy had to deal. "Fundamentalism is orthodoxy gone cultic," he wrote.

The mentality of fundamentalism is dominated by ideological thinking. Ideological thinking is rigid, intolerant, and doctrinaire; it sees principles everywhere, and all principles come in clear tones of black and white; it wages holy wars without acknowledging the elements of pride and personal interest that prompt the call to battle; it creates new evils while trying to correct old ones. (114)

Fundamentalists were too busy separating themselves from "the world" by refusing to attend movies, play cards, dance, drink alcohol, smoke cigarettes, or even use the new Revised Standard Version translation of the Bible because some "modernists" were involved in the project. For the fundamentalists, Carnell wrote, "saving souls" was valued as the "Chief End of Man."

Since the task of general charity is apparently unconnected with the work of saving souls, it rates low on the scale of fundamentalism. Handing out tracts is much more

important than founding a hospital. As a result, unbelievers are often more sensitive to mercy, and bear a heavier load of justice, than those who come in the name of Christ. The fundamentalist is not disturbed by this, of course, for he is busy painting “Jesus Saves” on rocks in public parks. (123)

Needless to say, the folks in places like Biola and Dallas Seminary whom Carnell criticized did not take kindly to what he had to say. He was viciously attacked in return, and, since Dr. Carnell had been appointed president of FTS, the seminary, too, was subjected to a lot of criticism from fundamentalists and dispensationalists. I think most of us students at FTS were supportive of Carnell, but that was not the case with some of his fellow faculty members who were still quite fundamentalistic themselves.

Dr. Carnell, who was probably not cut out to be an administrator in the first place, did not handle all of this very well. He became severely depressed and was subjected to the electric shock therapy that was in common use in those days, so some days he was not really able to function in the classroom. He finally had to stop teaching, resigned from the presidency at FTS, and died under circumstances that many people thought indicated that he had taken his own life. As remote as all of this might seem to many folks today, these theological disputes were not trivial matters. The stakes were high and there were few places where one could hide without taking one side or the other, as we learned soon enough after our arrival in Japan as MB missionaries during the summer of 1962.

In September 2012 Ruth and I drove to Pasadena to attend the 50th reunion of my graduating class from Fuller Theological Seminary, which by then had grown to be the largest seminary in the world, with 4000 students in three “schools,” meeting on eight different campuses, and offering degrees in three languages: English, Spanish, and Korean. The scale of the seminary is just one indication of the importance of neo-evangelical Christianity, not only domestically but globally. During a tour of the new and greatly expanded library on the campus, I happened to notice that one of my professors, Wilbur M. Smith, had taught at Fuller from 1947 to 1963, meaning that he had left the seminary just one year after my graduation. I was surprised, because I thought Smith would be at FTS until he was carried out on a stretcher. He was not among my favorite professors because I thought he was much too pompous and dogmatic.

I did not really realize during my years at Fuller just how serious the “war” was that was going on, not only between Dr. Carnell and other people at Fuller and the fundamentalists and dispensationalists at places like Biola and Dallas Seminary, but also behind the scenes at Fuller between some of the original members of the faculty (including Smith) and board members who were still staunch fundamentalists

and dispensationalists and other faculty and board members, including Dr. Edward John Carnell, who were much more open new evangelicals. The conflict culminated in an explosive “dark Saturday” in which the two parties openly confronted each other near the end of a strategic planning session. When the decision was made to appoint as President Dr. David Hubbard, who was on the side of the new evangelicals, Wilbur Smith and several members of the board and faculty resigned. Fuller Seminary was moving in a new direction. My surprise in belatedly learning all of this indicated just how clueless I was during my seminary student days, even though I was the vice president of our senior class. But I did begin to learn during my seminary years and in the experiences that followed where I was located on the map of the treacherous and shifting theological terrain in America—and beyond.

ANABAPTISM: A “THIRD WAY”?

Anabaptism is the location on the theological map that became very important in my life. In fact, if there is one theological location that I can call “home,” Anabaptism is it. Of course the story is much more complicated than just this, and there are many alternative versions of the story, but, very briefly: Anabaptism began in the sixteenth century as a movement within the broader ferment of the Protestant Reformation in Europe. The word Anabaptist means “re-baptize,” or “baptize again,” (after infant baptism) which today might not seem like that big a deal. At least I am pretty sure that few of us think that disagreements about the meaning of baptism merit calling the police, executing people, or is a good enough reason to suffer martyrdom. But in the context of the sixteenth century, baptism was a very big deal indeed because in those days in each Roman Catholic, Lutheran and Reformed territory the church and the state formed one organic whole. As in other versions of the old world, politics and religion supported and reinforced one another. So, for example, the head of the state appointed the top religious leadership and the church sanctified the coronation of the head of state. The government largely controlled what happened in the churches, including the appointment of pastors for local parishes, and churches were supported by the state with tax money. In that context, infant baptism meant, among other things, that the child was initiated at the same time as both a citizen of the state and a member of the church. Therefore, to re-baptize a person was considered to be both treason against the state and apostasy from the Christian faith because it called into question the legitimacy of both the church and the state.

In most places in Europe at that time, it was inconceivable that a society could hold together if there were more than one religion in a territory. Religion really did provide a center, a sacred canopy, for all social institutions and all cultural convictions and practices. It was also assumed that the local

government would decide what the official religion would be. The choice at the time was between Roman Catholicism, Lutheranism, or some version of Reformed Protestantism. Under these circumstances, it seemed natural that the power of the state, including the police, the courts, and the prison system would be used to enforce the rules of the church. Anabaptists, therefore, were doubly damned. They were criminals because they were in violation of the laws of the land and they were dangerous heretics in the eyes of the official state churches because they rejected some of the established orthodoxies. Thousands were persecuted and martyred for their new and subversive understandings of Christian faith. That is one of the reasons that the Anabaptists and the Mennonites, who were part of the larger Anabaptist movement, migrated as often as they did.

The Anabaptists did not agree that the government should control what happens in the church. In fact this was one of the basic issues that divided the early Swiss Anabaptists and Ulrich Zwingli, who was the leader of the Reformation in Zurich. Initially they were all part of one group that was studying the Bible and working together to reform the church in Zurich. The group agreed that changes needed to be made in the meaning and practice of the Mass (also known as Eucharist, Communion, or Lord's Supper), among other things. Both Luther and Zwingli, for a time, even appeared to agree with the more radical members of the group that there was no precedent in the Bible for infant baptism and that baptizing adults who understood what was happening and could make an informed commitment to faith would make for a healthier church. But, when it came right down to it, Zwingli, like other leaders in both Catholic and Reformed territories, insisted that the Zurich city council must approve any changes before they were put into effect in the church. The Anabaptists, on the other hand, argued that the church should not be subject to government control. Christian churches should be free (Anabaptist churches were sometimes called "Free Churches.") to make their own decisions, based on their biblical understandings and theological convictions. Both Catholic and Reformed "Magisterial" political and ecclesiastical leaders were convinced that this would mean the end of their Christian civilization. And since they were sure that no society could exist without one, single integrating religion to hold it all together, Anabaptism needed to be eliminated. So the Anabaptists were among the first to advocate a separation of church and state, contributing thereby to the fragmentation of the cohesive "old world" that I am trying to describe in these recollections and reflections.

Actually, in the sixteenth century there was a great variety of movements that were all lumped together and given the derogatory label, "Anabaptist." Some were violently revolutionary, calling for the establishment of the "Kingdom of God" by whatever means, including overthrowing the government

by military force if necessary. Others were “mystics,” convinced that Christianity was essentially a matter of one’s subjective experience of a personal relationship with God. The mystics thought that external forms, such as rituals like baptism and communion, and church buildings, with their statues, icons, and stained glass windows, and organizational structures, with their monks, clergy, bishops, popes, and religious orders were not only superfluous but they actually served as barriers to an authentic personal faith, so all of that should be done away with. Some parts of the movement became very legalistic, insisting on conformity to whatever rules the leadership decided to adopt, including rules about dress, like the head coverings and plain clothes of the “Old Mennonites,” the rejection of modern conveniences such as electricity and automobiles of the Amish, and insistence on communal ownership of property like the Hutterites.

The Mennonites were a sub-group (or actually several sub-groups, since there have always been multiple kinds of Mennonites) within this larger array of Anabaptist movements. They received their name from Menno Simons (1496-1561), a Roman Catholic priest in a small parish in a small village in the northern part of the Netherlands. Menno first developed doubts about the Catholic insistence that in the Mass the bread and wine become the “real” body and blood of Jesus (transubstantiation) and he then changed his mind about the practice of infant baptism, too. After his conversion, he left the Catholic Church, married and had a family, and he became a leader of a peaceful branch of the Anabaptist movement. Menno was convinced that Christianity was not just a matter of what one believes, but he insisted that beliefs and practices should be consistent with each other. Christians should practice care for their neighbors, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, providing aid for the homeless—and that true Christians should never participate in war. Their pacifist convictions in particular got Menno and his followers into trouble with the authorities, so this small community of radical Christians became a persecuted minority in pretty much every part of Europe, whether Catholic, Lutheran, or Reformed. Menno himself spent most of his post-conversion adult life underground. He and his followers moved from place to place, seeking whatever degree of political and religious freedom they could negotiate with the local rulers. That is how our Mennonite ancestors happened to spend time in Poland, and then in Russia, and eventually in the Americas.

Scholars differ on which specific tenets are central to the “Anabaptist vision.” Harold S. Bender, for example, was an influential Mennonite historian who suggested in a famous speech and essay in 1944 that three convictions were at the heart of the Anabaptist understanding of Christian faith: (1) *Discipleship*, or following the teachings and example of Jesus in one’s daily life, is the essence of

Christianity; (2) The church as a distinct *community* is central in the Christian life; and (3) Christians should practice an *ethic* of love and non-resistance (pacifism and reconciliation). Over a period of many decades, Bender's formulation of what the Anabaptist movement was all about provided inspiration for numerous scholars (including John Howard Yoder) and a "vision" that proved to be very useful in the development of several organizations, including as I will explain, Pacific College and the College Community Church where we were active for many decades. The CCCMB statement of identity is still organized around Bender's three points.

There was general agreement that at least two implications follow from the Anabaptist approach to Christianity. One is "non-conformity." This means that Christians should not simply accept the norms, values, and life-styles of the surrounding society but, instead, they should develop their own ways of life based on their personal and collective religious convictions. For some, living "simply" as good stewards of time, money, and natural resources was part of what non-conformity meant. For the Hutterites, this meant living in their own separate communities where shared ownership of property was required. For many Mennonites, non-conformity came to mean adopting simple, uniform clothing styles for both men (high-collared "plain coats") and women (long, plain dresses and head coverings, and, of course, no make-up or jewelry); and, in extreme cases such as the Amish, rejection of electricity, automobiles, and many other conveniences of the modern world. In their churchly life, Mennonite non-conformity sometimes meant rejecting the use of musical instruments and other practices such as Sunday schools for children and paid pastoral leadership. Non-conformity sometimes meant practicing the ancient rite of "foot-washing" and greeting fellow church members with a "holy kiss." Of course these and other practices made the Mennonites seem just plain weird, but that was part of the social cost of living in non-conformity, a cost that many Mennonites were willing to pay—for a time at least. Specifying exactly what non-conformity did and did not mean became problematic as Mennonites became more and more assimilated into mainstream American culture and society.

Non-resistance, or pacifism, was a second conviction that has been held by many Anabaptists down through the centuries. Pacifism is one way of saying that a Christian should follow the teachings (e.g. "love your enemies") and example (e.g. accepting the unjust punishment of death by crucifixion) of Jesus rather than the more normal human response of doing whatever it takes, including violence, to defend ourselves and to "get back" at people who wrong us. One implication of this ancient but minority Christian ethical tradition is refusal to participate in the military. This, too, is a form of non-conformity to what most everyone else does, so it leaves the non-resistant person open to criticism for

being unpatriotic or unrealistic. It also raises many questions about non-conformity to other non-military forms of violence, such as abuse that is rooted in racism and sexism.

Anabaptism is obviously a quite different approach to Christianity than the theological ideas that the fundamentalists, evangelicals and modernists were fighting about (e.g. biblical inerrancy, the virgin birth, and evolution). In fact, Calvin Redekop, a good friend and fellow sociologist, made the case (in his *Mennonite Society*) that the best way to understand Anabaptism is not by focusing on specific theological ideas at all, but to recognize Anabaptism as a “utopian movement.” A utopian movement starts with a “vision” of how things might be, but are not now, and then makes every effort to bring that vision into reality. So Anabaptism is basically about having a vision of what the Kingdom of God might look like in practice, and then working together in community to approximate that new way of life in the midst of this troubled real world. It is more communal, practical and ethical than subjective, theoretical or theological. Anabaptism is about working together to bring about one particular version of what Jesus called for in his Lord’s Prayer: “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

This brief outline of some of the important characteristics of Anabaptism will be incomplete without mentioning at least two recent developments that have called for a re-examination of some of the foundational convictions of Anabaptists. In my review of the history of Anabaptist-Mennonites who remained in Europe, I briefly mention recent and on-going discoveries of the complicity of Mennonites in Europe and elsewhere with Hitler’s Nazism, including his antisemitism and the Jewish Holocaust. The implications of this dark side of the Anabaptist-Mennonite story will become clearer as research continues.

A second development that has been traumatic for many of us in the Anabaptist-Mennonite world is the revelation that John Howard Yoder (1927-1997), undoubtedly the most powerful voice in the “Recovery of the Anabaptist Vision” movement, was a serial abuser of women over a period of several decades. Yoder, whom I met on a couple of occasions, was a *big* and dominating man in every way—physically, intellectually, inter-personally, and institutionally. And he was famous. He studied under Karl Barth in Basel, Switzerland and other leading scholars of that era and then he taught in the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS), first in Chicago and then in Elkhart, Indiana for many decades, and, finally at Notre Dame University in South Bend, Indiana. Among many other important leadership roles, he served as president of AMBS and he provided leadership in both the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) and Mennonite Church (MC) mission programs. He published numerous highly celebrated books and articles, including *The Politics of Jesus* (1972) which the

evangelical journal *Christianity Today* named as one of the most influential Christian books of the 20th century. There was no doubt that Yoder provided the most compelling case for Anabaptism, attracting followers who included important scholars such as Stanley Hauerwas at Notre Dame and then Duke University.

But for many years during the 1970s and 1980s there were rumors and behind-the-scenes conversations involving leaders in the Mennonite seminary (AMBS), Mennonite Church denominational leaders, and Yoder concerning numerous complaints from many women about unwelcome sexual overtures from Yoder. He privately received criticism and counsel, but, as was the case with many organizations and institutions in those days, both secular and religious, Protestant and Catholic, liberal and conservative, there were no public apologies and no formal actions were taken. In 1992 the local newspaper in Elkhart, Indiana published a report on Yoder's behavior but even then neither the seminary nor the denomination made any formal statements or took any public action. After his death in 1997, accusations and expressions of concern from women who had felt violated by Yoder continued to mount. Investigations indicated that at least 100 women accused Yoder of actions that were inappropriate, and worse. In 2013 the *New York Times* published a report on Yoder's reported sexual transgressions. Finally, in 2014, more than 16 years after his death, the leadership at AMBS issued a public apology for their failure to respond adequately to the situation, and in 2015 the seminary conducted a public service of "lament" for the suffering of the women who were Yoder's victims and for the failure of the institution to take appropriate action. Also in 2015 historian Rachel Waltner Goossen published a long review in the *Mennonite Quarterly Review* of what had (and had not) happened. Women continued to come forward with reports of abuse by Yoder, some from many years previously.

The fallout from these devastating revelations continues to this day. The questions are not only: Why would a leading Christian theologian and Mennonite church leader engage in exploitive sexual behavior with so many women over a period of so many years? And, how could Mennonite seminary and denominational leaders permit sexual abuse on the part of one of their important professors and leaders to continue for so long? Not only that, but does the Yoder case reflect not only personal failures on the part of Yoder himself and failure by the institutions that supported him, but also some deeply flawed convictions within the "Anabaptist vision" itself? These and other similar questions are so serious and troubling that the title of a recent book, of which FPU biblical studies professor and WAMC congregational leader, Laura Schmidt Roberts, is one of the editors, is *Recovering from the Anabaptist*

Vision: New Essays in Anabaptist Identity and Theological Method (2020). For some, it seems, Anabaptism is something to be *recovered from*, like a disease, or an economic recession, or an addiction. For me, Anabaptism is a helpful starting point in thinking about what it means to be Christian, but it is by no means the only, or the complete story. Anabaptism is part of the larger on-going Christian story, and the even larger human story, so Anabaptism, too, is in need of complementary ecumenical and inter-faith conversations. This way of thinking, I might note, is more a part of the new world than the old.

Now, back to my “map” of the theological world around me, which I also think of as a kind of “conversation” between alternative Christian traditions.

SOLA SCRIPTURA AND SOLA FIDE: BASIC PROTESTANT CONVICTIONS

There are several things that Anabaptists, evangelicals, fundamentalists and almost all other Protestants hold in common. One is the conviction that the biblical texts should provide an important part of the foundation for Christian thought and life. Christians should not simply accept the traditions of the church as they were handed down, and it was certainly not governmental or papal authority that should dictate the beliefs and practices of the church. Those were some of the things that “Protestants” protested against. Specific interpretations and applications moved in very different directions, but most Protestant groups agreed that the Bible should be taken very seriously. Martin Luther used the term *sola scriptura* (the Bible alone) to make this point, though the idea of inerrancy would have been quite foreign to Luther’s way of thinking since he did not mind criticizing biblical texts that did not fit into his understandings of what Christian faith was all about. He once famously called the Book of James in the New Testament a “straw epistle” that did not even belong in the Bible because of its emphasis on “works” rather than that salvation was through “faith alone” (*sola fide*) which was Luther’s fundamental spiritual insight. Ideas such as are found in James did not fit his new understanding that salvation was solely through the grace of God and has nothing at all to do with human “works,” so he didn’t hesitate to criticize texts like James 2:14:

Dear brothers and sisters, what is the use of saying you have faith if you don’t prove it by your actions? That kind of faith cannot save anyone... Faith that does not show itself by good works is no faith at all—it is dead and useless.

Most Anabaptists have been resistant to using the term inerrancy about the Bible, because the word is foreign to the biblical texts and it reflects assumptions and connotations that create more problems than they solve, but they have been willing to affirm that the teachings of the Bible are “inspired” and

“authoritative.” Because of this omission, my former professor at FTS, Harold Lindsell, once viciously attacked MBBS (the MB seminary in Fresno) in his book *The Bible in the Balance* for being liberal because they chose not to use the language of inerrancy. So terms like *sola scriptura* and inerrancy might not be all that helpful but they do point to a conviction shared by most Protestant groups that the Bible should be taken seriously.

Another point of general agreement among most Protestants is that personal faith is very important, a notion that Martin Luther expressed in the term *sola fide* (faith alone). Most Protestant groups emphasized the importance of personal convictions in matters of religious faith. In this they expressed disagreement with Roman Catholic teachings concerning the “sacraments” (the idea that the grace of God is transmitted via properly consecrated and administered elements like water, bread, and wine), or “transubstantiation” (the conviction that in the Mass the bread and wine become the “real” body of Christ), and certainly the sale of “indulgences” that were said to purchase reduced time in purgatory. For most Protestants, Christian faith was not automatic or magical. Faith required personal understanding and commitment. For evangelicals and fundamentalists, this often took the form of dramatic and emotional “conversion” experiences, or being “born again.” In my grandparents’ and great-grandparents’ generations, these profound religious experiences were often private, happening alone out in a field, for example, after a period of intense internal emotional-spiritual turmoil. By my generation, the experience of being born again was often facilitated by special meetings or programs such as evangelistic (or revival) campaigns like those that were conducted by Billy Graham, or in radio (and later TV) broadcasts such as “The Old Fashioned Revival Hour” hosted by Charles E. Fuller who founded Fuller Theological Seminary, or in Christian camping programs like Hume Lake Christian Camp up in the Sierras, or in other institutional contexts that moved people (especially children and youth) toward Christian conversion.

Some Mennonites were suspicious of these “modern” approaches to encouraging personal faith commitments, because they were too individualistic and they de-emphasized the communal and ethical dimensions of Christianity that were so important to the Anabaptists, but many Mennonite groups, including the MBs, accepted them, hiring their own denominational evangelists, publishing their own written materials, and establishing their own schools, radio broadcasts, camps and other programs that looked very much like what other denominations and para-church organizations were doing, only on a smaller scale.

Some of my most vivid recollections of my own early religious experiences involve feelings of guilt and fear that were generated in special meetings in MB institutions such as our church in Reedley, at the Hartland Camp in the Sierras, and in chapel services at Immanuel. One precondition for baptism into the MB church was being able to recount to the members in a congregational meeting an appropriately dramatic experience of feeling guilty for our sins (such as they were at age 12 or 14—and even younger in recent years), of being fearful of eternal punishment, and of finding forgiveness and peace through confessing our sins and acknowledging that Jesus died so that our sins could be forgiven, thereby opening the way for us to enjoy eternal life in heaven instead of suffering in hell forever. These experiences of being “saved” or “born again” seemed genuine at the time, but in retrospect they were often manipulated and contrived. Many of us who came through experiences like that were not eager to pass this part of our heritage on to our children and grandchildren. By no means does everything about the old world merit passing on—though the practices and institutions that I am talking about were not really all that old, going back not much before the 1940s and 1950s in the MB world.

Some Anabaptists also have other even more basic problems with what the notion of “faith” came to mean in evangelical and fundamentalist circles. Many conservative Christians tend to emphasize the “belief” component of “faith,” so “faith” often means an intellectual assent to a set of propositions that can be summarized in simple formulas such as “The Four Spiritual Laws” that were developed by the Campus Crusade for Christ organization, or the “sinner’s prayer” that was used in Billy Graham meetings, or even a small wordless book for children that consisted of a series of blank colored pages that represented the “plan of salvation” (e.g. black is for sin, red is for the blood of Jesus, white is for forgiveness, gold is for heaven). A favorite text that still shows up on placards held up in crowds at sports events is John 3:16: “For God so loved the world that...whosoever *believes* (emphasis mine) in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life.”

At the core of the specific set of ideas that evangelical and fundamentalist Christians are expected to believe, in addition to those I have already mentioned, is one particular interpretation of the meaning of the death of Jesus, generally known as the penal substitution theory of the atonement. The basic idea is that because God is perfectly holy and just, he requires that sin must be punished by death and eternal separation from God. Since we all inherit a sinful nature at birth (the idea of original sin) and we are all guilty of committing sins, we are all doomed. But because God also loves us human beings, sinful though we are, God punished his son, Jesus, as a substitute for us, thereby both demonstrating

his love for sinners and satisfying his own requirement of the death penalty for sin. All that is necessary for the substitutionary death of Jesus to be applied to us as individuals, making it possible for our sins to be forgiven, is our acceptance of this truth as applying to each of us personally. All that is required is “faith” that this is true for me. This is one possible interpretation of the meaning of the death of Jesus, but it is an interpretation that was unknown in the early centuries of the church and it is by no means the only possibility. If much recent scholarship is to be believed, it is an interpretation that is not even consistent with what the biblical texts actually say.

There are alternatives to this individualistic and subjective meaning of “faith” that has been dominant in most conservative Protestant circles. For example, the Greek word, *pistis*, that is usually translated as “faith,” with its strong emphasis on intellectual assent, would be better translated as “obedience” or “faithfulness.” *Pistis* means more than simply accepting a new way of thinking or feeling. It involves more than just a judicial transaction where God, as divine judge, issues the verdict that a person is “acquitted,” “not guilty,” “forgiven,” or “righteous.” *Fide*, the Latin word for the Greek *pistis*, is the root of our word “fidelity,” an English word that expresses the core meaning of the Greek *pistis* and Latin *fide* better than “faith.” *Fide* means being faithful, or obedient, or true to, or following after, or conforming to a model or an ideal. The German theologian, Dietrich Bonhoeffer (d. 1945), suggested that the German word *nachfolge*, “follow after,” more clearly expresses the basic biblical meaning than the English word “faith.” “Discipleship” is inherent in the original meaning of “faith.” So “faith” is far from simply an individual emotional experience or personal agreement with a set of propositions about God, sin, Jesus, salvation, etc. It is not simply a forensic procedure where God as heavenly judge pronounces a person as acquitted, or righteous, or innocent, or guilt free. Bonhoeffer called that kind of faith “cheap grace.” Real faith means fidelity, or faithfulness to a calling to a new way of life and commitment to a new kind of community. Many Mennonite groups took a dim view of making too much of a “conversion experience.” They were more interested in personal character and participation in the life of the community *after* conversion than they were in the process of *how* commitment to Christian faith began.

In what is surely his most widely quoted comment, Menno Simons described the nature of faith as follows:

True evangelical faith is of such a nature that it cannot lie dormant... it clothes the naked; it feeds the hungry; it comforts the sorrowful; it shelters the destitute; it aids and consoles the sad; it does good to those who do it harm; it prays for those who persecute it...

Michael Sattler, another influential early leader of the Anabaptist movement who was martyred in 1527, made a similar argument in a tract entitled “On the Satisfaction (‘Atonement’) of Christ.” He began by acknowledging the importance of the death of Jesus and the necessity of personal faith commitments, but then he took issue with the Lutheran and Reformed leaders who rejected the importance of “works” in their insistence that salvation is *sola fide*, by “faith alone.” Sattler listed a very long series of biblical texts that call Christians to live just and loving lives. Being a Christian, Sattler pointed out, is not just an internal mental and subjective condition. True Christian faith also includes an external dimension of actually living lives of love and justice, a way of life that was incompatible with how the “Christian” authorities were treating those with whom they disagreed, including the Anabaptists who were being persecuted and martyred by the authorities, including many of the leaders of the church.

Sattler himself was sentenced to death by a Reformed church/state court. His sentence included having his tongue cut out, chunks of his flesh torn from his body with red-hot iron tongs, and then his body was burned to ashes, all in the name of Christ. And that is how he died in Rottenburg on May 20, 1527. Menno, Sattler and many others paid dearly for their non-conformist conviction that Christian thoughts, words, and deeds should be consistent with each other, something that they did not see in the way their Catholic, Lutheran and Reformed fellow Christians were treating the Anabaptists. “Faith alone” is not enough.

Not only many Anabaptists but many others, too, find it easy to be comfortable with these alternative interpretations of what the Christian life is all about. In fact, one of the ironies of the current situation is that just as many Mennonite individuals, congregations, and even entire denominations are moving away from the Anabaptist components of their religious heritage, other “outsiders” are finding a new spiritual identity and vitality in Anabaptism. These non-ethnic “Neo-Anabaptists” come to the faith-tradition by “choice” without the historical and cultural baggage that those of us who are born as “cradle” Mennonites carry with us as an ethno-religious people who have our faith and our culture all mixed up together. British Anabaptist author Stuart Murray calls these new converts to Anabaptism *Naked Anabaptists* (the title of one of his books).

Perhaps all of this helps to clarify why the Anabaptists’ rejection of infant baptism and their practice of adult baptism (or *re*-baptism since in those days nearly everyone had been baptized as an infant) was such a big deal during the time of the Reformation. For the Anabaptists, baptism was a symbolic act that represented a person’s informed commitment to follow the way of Christ as a member of a Christian community, the “body of Christ,” something that only an adult was capable of doing. They

were convinced that this was the original meaning of Christian baptism because that was what baptism meant in the New Testament and in the practices of the early church. As I said, both Luther and Zwingli initially shared this understanding of the meaning of baptism but they later changed their minds, arguing instead that infant baptism is a Christian version of Jewish circumcision. The Anabaptists rejected that argument because the New Testament and the writings of the early church do not support that idea. Baptism was for adults since a commitment to faith came first, followed by baptism as a symbolic expression of that commitment.

Another argument that Catholics, Lutherans, and the Reformers (but not the Eastern Orthodox churches) also made in support of infant baptism was that it was necessary in order to free infants from the guilt of original sin with which they were born. If every person is born a sinner (the idea of original sin), then every person, newborns included, is destined for eternal damnation unless something happens to deliver them from the guilt of sin that every human being inherited as a descendant of fallen Adam. Baptism removes the guilt of sin, the argument went, so that is why infants should be baptized if their parents want them to go to heaven instead of hell—and the sooner the better, since the likelihood of infant mortality was very high in those days. The Anabaptists rejected that argument, too, because there is not a hint of these ideas in Judaism, in the New Testament, or in the writings of the early church fathers. The whole idea of original sin as part of the doctrine of the western church started with Augustine in the fourth century, and he based his argument on a mistranslation (He did not know the Greek language.) of the crucial biblical texts. So it got them into a lot of trouble, but the Anabaptists insisted that baptism is meaningful only when it is received by an adult who is prepared to make a personal commitment to a new way of life. Baptism without a faith-commitment, Luther once said, is like an envelope without a letter, but he eventually retained the practice of infant baptism in the version of Christianity that he founded.

I did not really begin to understand what my Mennonite and Anabaptist heritage was all about until I wrote some research papers during my time at Fuller Seminary, and then as I continued my studies as a graduate student, and even later as I studied and taught at Pacific College, but the more I learned about Anabaptism, the more I felt that if I had one real theological “home,” Anabaptism was it. So it was disconcerting when we arrived in Japan as MB missionaries to discover that many of our missionary colleagues did not share our enthusiasm for what we had discovered in new forms of evangelicalism and in Anabaptism. For the most part, they remained staunch dispensationalists and we soon found ourselves enmeshed in the same kinds of conflicts that had been going on at Fuller

Seminary, only this time we were partisans instead of mere by-standers. I will review some of my own spiritual pilgrimage next and then I will return to the Japan part of my story.

PERSONAL MIGRATIONS THROUGH THE RELIGIOUS LANDSCAPE

I grew up in Reedley, California in a Russian Mennonite immigrant ethno-religious community. If “Mennonite” is shorthand for the ethnic component and “Anabaptist” represents the religious dimension, I think I inherited more of the cultural dimension than the particulars of the “Anabaptist vision.” Fundamentalism and dispensationalism provided more of the foundation for the education that I received in Sunday School in the Reedley MB Church and in the Immanuel Academy than Anabaptist influences. The Inter Varsity Christian Fellowship organization in which we first became involved during our two years at Reedley College was a neo-evangelical organization, and it felt liberating for me to learn this new and more expansive approach to Christian thought and life. But both the MBs and IVCF were also deeply influenced by pietism, and that is one of the themes that runs through my letters home to Ruth during my time in the U.S. Army. I will illustrate and explain something of what pietism meant to us personally, and how and why I moved away from much of that.

First, like other good pietists, Ruth and I were both convinced that God had very specific plans for our lives, so we were eager to know and to follow God’s will for us. (The first of the “Four Spiritual Laws” popularized by the Campus Crusade for Christ organization is “God has a wonderful plan for your life.”) This applied not only to general ethical principles and big decisions like how to respond to the military draft, what to think about our professional futures, and our decision to become engaged, but also in what seem like insignificant details such as which camera or car to buy, whether to take a leave from the army in Korea or not, and what date to set for our wedding. We were quite sure that God did indeed have specific plans for even the smallest details of our lives. At each step along the way we were eager to find out what those plans were and then to follow them as best we could. Sometimes we could find a passage in the Bible that would point the way, since, as good fundamentalists, we could be confident that the Bible was entirely true and trustworthy, and would light the way for us. My understandings of the teachings of Jesus and Paul helped me decide to enter the military as a conscientious objector, and biblical texts related to sexual morality made it easier for me to resist the seductive invitations of the Korean and Japanese women whom many of my fellow soldiers found to be so irresistible.

But there are no biblical texts that dictate whether it is God’s will to buy an Argus C-3 or a Minolta camera, or to choose between a 1948 Chevy and a 1957 Pontiac. What to do then? Sometimes

circumstances made things clear. While I was in the army in Korea, I entertained the hope that I might be able to throw the javelin far enough to earn a trip from Korea to a bigger track meet in Tokyo, or even all the way back to the U.S. and a chance for another brief meeting with Ruth, but when I could manage only a very modest distance in a wind-blown track meet in Seoul, well, obviously, it was not God's will for me to move on to the next levels, so I needed to be content to be back with my medical company. When none of the other dates were available, we could be pretty sure that it was God's will that our wedding should be on June 20, even though it was a Thursday night—a somewhat unorthodox evening for a wedding. Since God was sovereign over even the minutest details in every area of our lives, we could be confident that whatever happened was somehow His will, so we needed to learn how to interpret both the biblical texts and the meanings of the circumstances in which we found ourselves. Like all good pietists, both of us were very sure that a daily (or almost daily) personal “quiet time” was essential to truly understanding God's will for our lives—and for having the strength to follow through when we did know what His will was. A quiet time consisted of finding a private place in which one could read the Bible and meditate on its meanings and applications to one's everyday life and relationships, and then a time of prayer to God. Faithfulness in one's quiet time would *almost* guarantee that one would receive both enough guidance to know what God's will was and enough strength to follow through on that knowledge. In our letters Ruth and I frequently shared what we had been learning in our quiet times.

When I recently read a biography of Irene Webster-Smith, missionary to Japan from England, I was reminded what it was like to live in the really pious sub-culture that we were part of during our college and army days. Smith *Sensei* (an honorific title for a teacher, doctor, artist, or other highly respected person, and the title of her biography) belonged to a very conservative and pious missionary organization called the Japan Evangelistic Band that was headquartered in London. Before WW II Smith-sensei operated a home in Tokyo for Japanese girls and after the War she built the large Ochanomizu Center for university students in Tokyo. For a number of years she was a respected staff person for IVCF, so her approach to Christian faith was entirely compatible with what we learned in IVCF in those days. To cite but one example from her miracle-filled life, when Smith-sensei was invited by a Japanese medical doctor to move her home for orphaned and abandoned children from Tokyo to two houses the MD owned in Kyoto, she did not know whether to go or stay. But when she read the phrase “get thee down south” in the story of Phillip's encounter with an Ethiopian official out in the desert (Acts 8:26-40), she knew that was the Lord telling her what to do, quite independent of

what the original intent of the text might have been. So she moved her home for girls down south to Kyoto. One could never tell when one might receive a message from God in ways like that. Many of the most important people in our lives could tell stories something like that, and, as I will explain later, so could we.

But I faced major challenges that made it difficult for me to remain faithful in observing my quiet time while I was in the military. For one thing, I could not find a good place to be alone. Especially in Korea, the regimental library was too far away for a daily visit and it was not always open at the right times. The chapel was heated only for services. During the time I was working in the small clinic operated by our medical company in Korea, I could sometimes find an empty treatment room—but that was still a semi-public area and there were many interruptions. So I was pretty much stuck in my tent where I was almost always surrounded by guys who were arguing about something, or drinking, or playing games, or even enjoying the services of Korean prostitutes. I reported to Ruth that I read the Bible (and wrote letters) in my bunk, sometimes by candlelight after the lights were out, but on many occasions I signed off on my letter writing because the commotion around me was just too great. These are conditions that are not exactly conducive to the cultivation of one's interior spiritual life. Both Ruth and I were deeply concerned about the spiritual malnutrition that would result from my inability to maintain a regular schedule of quiet times. I felt really guilty about this very serious spiritual shortcoming.

But that was not all. As pietists, we also recognized the need for close fellowship with like-minded believers. We had learned through IVCF, especially, that there was great value in meeting regularly with a small group for sharing the joys and concerns in our daily lives, reading the Bible, and praying together. This kind of fellowship, along with regular quiet times, provided a kind of “recipe” for living a healthy and productive Christian life. But, again, I could never quite succeed in establishing the kind of fellowship group that had been so important in our IVCF days. I did not have the wisdom or courage to initiate such a group and my timid efforts to establish an intimate fellowship group with some of my fellow soldiers never seemed to get very far. My cousin Earl and close friends like Howard Getz and Don Butler were good Christian guys but they did not seem to resonate with the approach to Christian faith that we had learned and practiced in IVCF. I regularly attended chapel services throughout my time in the army, but that did not really count for the kind of fellowship that I felt was so important. As with my struggles with maintaining a regular quiet time, my failure to structure a small group for Christian fellowship added to my feelings of failure and guilt.

And there was still more. Fundamentalists, evangelicals, and pietists shared in the conviction that “witnessing” to non-Christians was a very important part of living the Christian life. After all, Jesus’ “Great Commission” to his disciples was that they should be his witnesses to all, near and far. Some people, like Ruth’s “uncle” Dietrich Dyck in Pasadena, seemed to be really good at this. He handed out “tracts” and always seemed to be ready to witness to pretty much everyone he met—not only neighbors but also waitresses, gas station attendants (when there still was such a thing beyond the state of Oregon), everyone. There was a lot of emphasis on the Great Commission in our MB Church in Reedley and at Immanuel, and our IVCF activities included studying what the essence of the Gospel was and practice sessions on how to communicate that message to those around us, friends and strangers alike. Before I entered the military, I even found a verse in the Bible that said something about the heathen being my inheritance and I took this to mean that during my time in the army there would for sure be at least one person whom I would lead to Christian faith. But, alas, if this happened, I was not aware of it. More feelings of failure and guilt.

IVCF used a variety of means to instill and then reinforce these and other evangelical and pious convictions and practices. They hired “staff members” who visited IVCF groups on college campuses. Ruth and I had great respect for many of these staff people. Our favorite was Dorothy (Dottie) Barnhouse who periodically visited the CLOC club on the Reedley College campus. Dottie was a tall, stately, beautiful young woman from Philadelphia with a long blond ponytail. She was just a few years older than we were but she was already a graduate of Radcliffe, a certified “genius” with a tested IQ of something like 180, and she had already lived in several exotic foreign lands. She was the daughter of Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse, pastor of the large Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia and founder and editor of the widely read *Eternity* magazine. He was one of the leading evangelicals of his era. Needless to say, we Immanuel graduates, students in a small junior college in the small town of Reedley, in the rural San Joaquin Valley were impressed! And she modeled for us the meaning of finding and following God’s will. She traveled to Germany to marry a staff member in the German version of IVCF. Unfortunately, things did not work out as anticipated. After giving birth to twins, the marriage ended and Dottie spent her professional career singing American folk songs and other music in Germany and other countries in Europe and in the U.S. Of course we did not know about all of this until later. Dottie and I even exchanged a few letters while I was in the army. In 2013 we managed to learn that Dorothy was living and teaching voice in San Francisco so we were able to enjoy a wonderful reunion over lunch in a Japanese restaurant and we continued our recently renewed friendship via email

and in a second visit in April 2016. She visited us here in Fresno during the spring of 2017 and, unfortunately, she passed away in July, 2019.

IVCF encouraged us students to attend their regional camps. Ruth and I both attended Campus by the Sea (CBS) on Catalina Island off the Southern California coast several times and we also attended an IVCF camp in Campus in the Woods in Ontario, Canada. We had a lot of fun at CBS, but we were also surely shaped by the busy schedule of meetings, classes, lectures, sermons and intense new friendships that we experienced there. We also learned to sing some classic old Christian hymns that we still enjoy singing.

During my seminary days I did some volunteer work with IVCF so I participated in a month-long camp on Catalina Island, where I received one of the greatest surprises of my life. Ruth decided to visit me for a weekend with toddler Terri, leaving infant Connie back in Pasadena with baby sitters, so she landed just off-shore from Campus by the Sea in a sea-plane! That was really awesome! Ruth and I even drove across the continent to attend the ICVF summer camp, Campus in the Woods, in Ontario, Canada as a kind of second honeymoon after our wedding in June, 1957. And IVCF published *HIS* magazine and other thoughtful and academically respectable books, pamphlets, etc. to provide support and encouragement for us students who were trying to be faithful Christians on secular college campuses. Ruth sent *HIS* magazines to me while I was in the army and in my letters I made frequent mention of how much I appreciated what I read there.

So in these and other ways IVCF profoundly shaped us during our college and army years. In our letters we wrote of IVCF as a “hothouse,” not in a pejorative sense, but with appreciation for providing us with a place of spiritual and social nurturance and growth. We wanted the home that we would establish after our marriage to provide a similar kind of hothouse, a place of hospitality and support for the people in our lives, whether in the U.S. or in some kind of foreign mission setting.

But there were other things going on around (and in) me that were not so affirming of my pious approach to Christianity. I do not think I was really tempted by the carousing of so many of my fellow soldiers. I repeatedly commented to Ruth that I found their drinking bouts and sexual escapades “worse than animals,” so that was not something that I wanted to incorporate into my life. Of course “religion” was one of the many topics that we soldiers talked about from time to time. I thought I could understand why my good Seventh Day Adventist friends thought that it was important that we Christians continue to observe Saturday instead of Sunday as the Sabbath Day of Rest, and why they followed some of the other legal requirements in the Old Testament and other similarly “weird” rules like not drinking any

cokes or coffee, or eating shrimp. Many SDAs refused to observe holidays like Christmas and Easter because these celebrations had originated in “pagan” festivals. These eccentricities actually made our lives somewhat easier for the rest of us because we could often trade schedules for duty so the SDAs could be off on Saturdays and we on Sundays and on the forbidden (for them) holidays. It was pretty easy for me to dismiss their arguments because they sounded too rigid and legalistic to me. But some other things were not so easy to ignore.

My philosopher friend and army buddy, Frank Morrow, for example, once told me that my approach to decision-making was irresponsible in the same way that it was irresponsible for a Christian Scientist to refuse medical treatments. Christian Scientists were refusing to use the best insights of modern medical science because of irrational religious convictions and I was using inappropriate readings from the Bible, taken out of context, and the circumstances around me to make decisions *for* me instead of using my own mind in a more rational and responsible way to analyze and choose between the available options. Of course I argued with him, but I also had to admit that there might be some truth to what he said. One reason Morrow was not so easy to dismiss was that not only was he very smart but he was also a very funny and charming guy. (He was the one who asked about having two women pregnant for three months each in order to avoid deployment to Korea.) He began many of his days with a cheery “Good morning, God!” that was not entirely irreverent. And whenever anything went bad, whether it was the weather, or lack of mail, or harassment by our officers, he would mumble “Damn communists.” Once when he went dancing in a club in Tokyo, he took as his partner a 25 year old Japanese widow who was selling flowers in front of the club instead of one of the well-dressed beauties who were waiting to be picked up by us GIs, for a price, of course. Whenever Morrow spoke, it was usually worth listening, partly because of the quality of his personal character.

And then there were the military chaplains. First, the chaplains were commissioned officers, so in my mind they already had two strikes against them. I did not use this terminology at the time, but most of the chaplains were theological “liberals.” Usually I could not recognize their sermons as bearing any relationship to what I thought of as biblical Christianity. Most chaplains represented one of the “mainline” denominations (e.g. Congregational, Episcopal, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian) that dominated religion in America in those days, and the services were often “liturgical” in form, so there was a lot that I considered to be little more than dead rituals. I had mixed motives for regularly attending chapel services. Chapel services provided a legitimate way to escape from my company area and a means to avoid some of the duties that were no fun at all. The chapel services also provided at least a

little bit of peace and quiet now and then. But I also kept hoping that I would get more out of it than just an escape from something worse. I was not so much of a separatist fundamentalist that I could simply dismiss the whole thing out of hand.

One experience will illustrate some of what I mean. In August 1956 I managed to be sent to Japan on a “Religious Retreat” in a beautiful retreat center near a beach not too far from Tokyo that was operated by the U.S. military for personnel from all over Asia. The chaplain in charge of the center was a tall, distinguished Lt. Colonel who had been a part of the trials of war criminals in Nuremberg in Germany after the end of WW II, so he had many interesting things to share—in his deep, resonant bass voice. Colonel Achterman had been chaplain for some of the highest ranking German war criminals so he had stories to tell about the spiritual struggles of some of the leaders of the German war effort as they faced conviction and execution. These experiences, he said, had completely changed his whole way of thinking about religion, Christianity, and God. I explained to Ruth: “His main thesis being that man’s idea about God has evolved from the God to be feared, of Adam’s and Abram’s day on through the Bible until in Jesus Christ, we came to understand God as love and compassion” The colonel had discovered through his experiences in Nuremberg that “Man is seeking to find God. This is wrong. God is seeking man (e.g. ‘Adam, where art thou?’). He is there—in each one of us. Instead of our striving and seeking Him, we should just stop and let him come out of us—let Him grow and control the fullness of our lives.” (August 14, 1956) Needless to say, this more “liberal” approach to Christian faith was quite distant from what I had taken with me from Reedley and IVCF, but I could not simply dismiss it. Colonel Achterman made me think, as did some of the other chaplains, and I shared my thoughts with Ruth.

I also entertained (and wrote about) some other things that troubled me. When evangelical super-hero Billy Graham came to preach in the outdoor amphitheater in Camp Casey in Korea, I remember hobbling over from my quarters alone because I was still recovering from a boil on my foot so I could not march along with the rest of my group. I expected that this might be a great opportunity for witnessing, but when many of my buddies filed in with their units, attending because they were ordered to do so by their superiors, I had to wonder what kind of spiritual good could come from attendance that was coerced. No one had to require attendance at the U.S.O. shows that featured real, live American girls like the actress Rita Moreno who visited us in Camp Casey. In my mind, coercion and faith did not fit together, so I was disappointed that Billy Graham would be so much a part of the military system.

There was also the big problem of the gap between churchly professions and actual behavior. I was blessed with a small circle of really good friends who seemed to be able to hold their convictions and their actions together, but not so for too many of my “Christian” colleagues. I clearly recall one such case that I thought was really pathetic. When our troop ship stopped in Yokohama en route back to the U.S. from Korea, we were permitted to go ashore, since it was highly unlikely that we would “jump ship” and stay in Japan rather than returning home. One young soldier asked if he could tag along with our little group of “churchy” guys because, he said, he was returning to his church, family, and girlfriend back in America and he felt really rotten about what he had done while he was in Korea and on previous trips to Japan. He was determined not to yield to the temptations and do the same thing again on his way home, so he hoped that being with us would help him stay on the straight and narrow. But his resolve did not last very long with all of the cute and available Japanese girls just waiting for us GIs, so our friend soon disappeared. When we reunited on board the ship after our shore leave, the guy felt really miserable. He had failed again, and he hated himself for doing so. I felt very sorry for him, and I had to wonder about a religious faith that did not help a person live up to his own ethical ideals. I was also troubled by my observation that many of the guys who made no Christian profession lived more ethical lives than some of the guys who did.

I was also reading many books that I found in our local army library. I read *Tale of Two Cities* and *Gulliver’s Travels*. For a while I read many of Ernest Hemmingway’s novels. On the one hand, he was a “godless and immoral” man, but, on the other hand, his writing was very compelling. I suggested to Ruth that she read *Farewell to Arms* if she wanted to know what military life was really like. I read Lloyd C. Douglas’ 1942 novel, *The Robe* and Asch’s *The Apostle* and I wondered in my letters to Ruth what life was really like back in first century Palestine and what the implications of that might be for who Jesus was and why Paul understood Jesus as he did. I was convinced then already that the cultural context really does matter a lot.

So my letters to Ruth indicate that in some ways my 21 month stay in the military was a time of migration across the theological map. By no means did I abandon my sense that my real spiritual home was in evangelicalism and pietism, because I continued to try to fulfill the expectations of those traditions and I felt guilty for not living up to all of the ideals that I aspired to, but I also felt compelled to open myself to new ways of thinking about the importance of culture in shaping both one’s inherited religious traditions and one’s own personal convictions. I was by no means a “liberal” but neither was

I just a fundamentalist any longer. A convinced fundamentalist would have more easily dismissed most of the things that I was struggling with.

As I re-read correspondence from those days, it seems clear to me that by the time I graduated from Fuller Seminary in 1962 I had left behind much of the narrow, legalistic, separatist fundamentalism and dispensationalism that were part of my MB past. I had continued to move toward a more open neo-evangelicalism and I was very interested in what Anabaptism had to offer, but I still carried with me a lot of the piety that was part of both my MB and IVCF heritage. As we continued to move both geographically and culturally, and as society and culture shifted around me, I continued my theological and religious journey.

DIGRESSION: WHO WAS THE HISTORICAL JESUS?

Before I end these reflections on my theological journey, I would like to digress to summarize just one more recent example of an approach to understanding Christian faith that does not fit neatly onto the theological map as I have charted it here. Andre LaCocque is the 88 year old author of *Jesus the Central Jew: His Times and His People* (2015) that I happened upon in the FPU Library. LaCocque spent the many years of his professional life as a professor in the University of Chicago studying the biblical texts and the extra-biblical literature written (in their various original languages) during the centuries that preceded and followed the era during which Jesus lived. If we want to really understand who Jesus was and what his teachings meant in their original situation, and then consider what the texts might mean to us in ours, I think we need the help of scholars like LaCocque because it is easy for each of us to construct our own images of who Jesus was. I will list just a few of the many conflicting images that Christians have constructed down through the years: a crusading soldier with crosses on his sword and shield; an intimate friend who provides only affirmation and support; a model salesman (or teacher or counselor); a patriotic American who views this nation as “God’s last, best hope for mankind.” And then there is also the judgmental Jesus who rejoices when LGBT people are shot to death in a gay nightclub. Not all of these characterizations can be accurate, so, we might do well to ask: Who was the *real* Jesus? What happens if we try to suspend our inherited and taken-for-granted assumptions and try to take seriously the literary and other evidence that is available to us? I am devoting considerable space to this discussion because LaCocque is typical of many scholars, including Anabaptist-Mennonites, who try to interpret the biblical texts in the context of what is known about the society, culture, and literature of the first-century world.

Distorted accounts of who Jesus was actually started very early when non-Jewish (Gentile) believers used concepts and thought-processes from their Greek and Roman cultures to formulate and express their new-found Christian faith. In some ways that is a positive thing (e.g. Many missionaries encourage converts to “contextualize” their new-found Christian faith in ways that are appropriate to their own cultures.) but in the process, the Jewishness of Jesus was downplayed. In fact, LaCocque says, by the second century CE, Christians in places like Greece and Rome were somewhat embarrassed by the Jewish background of their faith, so by about the fourth century and ever since, the Jewishness of Jesus has been mostly ignored. Even today most of us do not really think very much about the implications of the Jewishness of Jesus for how we understand Christian faith. But the fact of the matter is that Jesus was one of many itinerate rabbis who traveled around Palestine during the early years of the first century CE, teaching small groups of disciples, performing miracles, making dramatic claims for themselves and making predictions about the future. The early Christian church was one of many “sectarian” groups within Judaism, quoting the Jewish scriptures, worshipping in the temple in Jerusalem, and then in Jewish synagogues here and there around the Mediterranean and beyond, and arguing about the meaning of the Jewish Torah (law). So, we might ask, how was Jesus similar to and different from the other prophets and “messiahs” of his day and age?

The words that Jesus used for himself were terms and titles that had deep roots in Jewish history: Messiah (“Christ” is the Greek translation), Son of God, Son of Man, but he had his own interpretations of the meanings of these and other pillars of the Jewish faith of his era. Jesus had his own way of talking about Israel, the temple in Jerusalem, and the Torah (Jewish law). Jesus was always very careful in how he used these titles and terms, because what he intended to mean and what his hearers expected him to mean were often quite different, and that is still often true today.

As was the case in much of the traditional Jewish literature of those days, the New Testament reports that Jesus did much of his teaching in parables. He used stories and performed actions that pointed toward the truths that he was trying to communicate. His miracles were to be understood as “signs.” But the meanings of both his words and his deeds were often “hidden” from his audiences. Even his disciples did not “get it,” in spite of the explanations that Jesus sometimes offered in private.

So Jesus’ earliest followers understood, rightly or wrongly, Jesus to say that the end of the age was imminent and that he would return soon in the clouds in power and glory to establish his new “Kingdom.” This expectation was based, in part, on Jesus’ use of the imagery from the book of *Daniel* in the Old Testament of a coming “Son of Man,” a title that Jesus sometimes used for himself, but with

varied connotations. His earliest followers expected a new, earthly, political kingdom that would bring liberation from brutal Roman oppression and would usher in a new age that would be characterized by justice, righteousness, and the love for God and neighbor (*shalom*) that was at the heart of all of Jewish law. Since his followers anticipated that this second coming of Jesus would happen in the very near future, they did not bother to begin to write down their recollections of what Jesus had said and done until several decades after his death. Spreading the word orally seemed to be good enough for the brief time that remained. And when they did begin to compose the short “biographies” that we know as the four “gospels,” letters, and other writings that are collected in the New Testament, they used literary forms that were shaped by Jewish ways of expressing themselves. They used metaphors and symbols that their readers and hearers would understand, but the meanings are all-too-often lost to us twenty centuries later and across the boundaries of vast cultural differences. It takes a lot of work to reconstruct who the “historical Jesus” was. For most of us, it is easier to simply re-interpret him in ways that fit our own personal preferences and prejudices, or even, the confessions of faith that we have inherited as members of our denominational communities.

One of the ways in which the Greek and Roman Christians of the first century did this, LaCocque says, is by trying to interpret literally what most first-century Jewish people would have understood as symbols, metaphors, or parables. The non-Jewish (Gentile) Christians were not content with stories, symbols, and metaphors. They wanted the “hard facts” of history and biography, and so that is how they interpreted the teachings and actions of Jesus as they had been passed along, first orally and then in written form as recorded in both the New Testament and the extra-biblical literature of the time to which we have access. In the process, the Jewish roots of Christianity became separated from Gentile interpretations, and then the Jewishness of Jesus was mostly ignored or forgotten.

Along with this loss came the loss of the *communal* dimension of religion that the Jews (including Jesus) took for granted, and, finally, the ascendance of the individualistic interpretation of Christian faith that most of us in the West read back into the biblical texts. To cite but one recent example: When the famous evangelist, Billy Graham (and many other evangelicals, too), preached and wrote about salvation as “peace with God,” he mostly meant a personal subjective relationship between the individual and God rather than the much broader “shalom” that the Jews had in mind when they thought about “salvation.” For the Jews, shalom means wholeness, health, and harmony in relationships within the entire community, including relationships with the world of nature. In that way of thinking, individual subjective “peace” is more a product of right relationships (*shalom*) in the community than

its foundation. Reducing the notion of “salvation” to the individual, subjective level is to miss the point of what the Judeo-Christian tradition was originally all about.

If people like LaCocque are anywhere near right, we modern western Christians might have a lot of re-thinking to do, and some of that re-thinking is well underway. To very briefly cite only one example: My friend, John E. Toews, like other scholars, has recently called into question the idea of “original sin” as it has been understood in western Christianity since the time of Augustine in the fourth century. Toews points out that this idea was nowhere to be found in Judaism, in the writings of the church “fathers” until the time of Augustine (d. 430), and it has never been part of the faith of Eastern Orthodox Christians. Augustine misunderstood and mistranslated some key biblical texts, and the idea of original sin has been taken for granted as a pillar of faith for many Christians ever since. Similar re-examinations of traditional Christian teachings such as eternal punishment in hell, the virgin birth of Jesus, the nature and meaning of the death (“atonement”) and resurrection of Jesus, his “second coming,” and the Trinity are underway, not necessarily because of a desire to reject our inherited version of Christian faith but in order to bring Christian faith more into line with what the earliest sources actually say and mean. It is developments like these that I have in mind when I say that the theological terrain around me has been shifting, even as I have made my own pilgrimage along the way.

If these reviews prove to be right, there might be many things that we modern Christians will need to confess. In many ways we have re-made God in our own image. To the extent that this is so, it might be appropriate for us to join in the prayer of the fictional sixteenth century Franciscan missionary to Japan whom I will introduce later: “I sought to satisfy my own pride by taking the name of God in vain. I confused my own will with the will of God.”

In the next section I will review some of the experiences that we had during our many years of being in and out of Japan, beginning with my first glimpses of Japan in January 1956 and ending, for the most part, with our last brief visit in the fall of 2006. I say “for the most part” because even though we have not been back to Japan since 2006, we continue to entertain guests from there, we maintain communication (sometimes in Japanese) with a few friends in Japan, and I have spent a lot of time editing papers for Japanese seminary students here in Fresno. And, as I mentioned, researching and writing a history of the Mennonite Brethren mission in Japan occupied a lot of my time between May, 2016 and the early months of 2020. I think that big project might be the final link in the long chain of our relationships with Japan.

SOJOURNS IN JAPAN

I have been asked from time to time why we spent so many years in Japan. As I said, Ruth and I have lived in Japan for stays of more than one month 11 different times, for a total of about a dozen years, spread over five decades (not including my visits during my army days) from 1962 to 2006. One way to avoid giving a serious answer to the question was to say that we kept going back to Japan because we like to eat *zaru soba*. *Zaru soba* is a thin buckwheat noodle served cold on a small bamboo mat over a bed of ice with thinly sliced dried seaweed (*nori*) on top of the noodles. The cold noodles are dipped into a cup of soy-based sauce into which one mixes hot *wasabi* (horseradish) and thinly sliced green onions. Sometimes a raw quail egg is also included, to be mixed into the sauce with the *wasabi* and onions. We think it is a wonderfully refreshing light meal to enjoy on a hot and humid summer day. We have never found really good *zaru soba* outside of Japan, and so, we jokingly explained, that is why we kept going back to Japan. In what follows, I will review our history of visits to Japan and eventually I will try to provide a more serious answer to the question of “Why?” than simply that we like Japanese food (though that might be a good enough reason).

VISITS FROM KOREA: 1956-57

My first visit to Japan was in May 1956 during the time that I was stationed in Korea with the U.S. Army. Actually, our troop ship had docked briefly in Yokohama in early January, 1956 en route to Korea but we were not permitted to go ashore, undoubtedly because too many of us GIs would not return to the ship to continue our journey to Korea. I did report to Ruth that I found what little I could see of Japan from our ship very interesting and I was also really impressed by the glimpse of spectacular Mt. Fuji that I was able to get while we were leaving Japanese waters.

Japan in 1956 was still in a recovery mode from the aftermath of World War II but it was far more economically developed than Korea at the time, partly because Japan had served as a sort of supply depot for U.S. and other military forces during the U.N “police action” in Korea. Here and there in Japan in 1956 it was still possible to see damage from World War II that had not yet been rebuilt, and there were still some beggars, often disabled and dressed in old military uniforms, in front of large urban rail stations, but, for the most part, people were comfortably clothed, housed and fed. Compared with Korea, Japan seemed to be prosperous, clean and well organized. Traffic conditions seemed to be at least somewhat orderly. The streets were paved and, unlike Korea at the time, there were actually vehicles on the streets besides ox-drawn farm carts and military Jeeps and trucks. The trains not only

ran on time, but the long-distance expresses even included dining cars, complete with white table cloths and napkins. As I mentioned, going to Japan from Korea seemed like going half way home.

I almost always travelled from Korea to Japan with my cousin Earl or other good army buddies. We were transported to and from Japan on military planes, including noisy and uncomfortable C-124 “Flying Boxcars.” During one night flight from Tokyo back to Korea, our transport plane suddenly began to lose speed and altitude at a point that we calculated to be about half way across the Japan Sea between Korea and Japan. Of course we mere enlisted men in the back of the aircraft did not merit any explanation (We probably could not have heard one anyhow in the noisy plane.), so all we could do was wonder and perspire with cold sweat at the thought of crash-landing in the frigid water in a dark sea. It was a great relief when we began to see lights on the ground below us as we descended. Instead of flying directly back to Korea across the Japan Sea as we had expected, our plane was landing at the Itami Airbase in Osaka for some never explained reason. This was one of those life-flashes-before-your-eyes moments.

From my very first impressions of Japan, I was charmed. Included in the many pages that I sent to Ruth describing my initial observations and thoughts are the following:

Japan is beautiful! (On the two hour bus ride from Tachikawa AFB to Camp Drake near Tokyo)... my mouth just hung open! Tile roofed oriental buildings, green fields, green fences of bamboo, green yards and gardens, highways, cars, motorcycles, lights, stores, shops, people—and everything as neat and clean looking as one would expect the polite, neat and courteous Japanese people to insist on there being! Beginning with that first look out of a bus window, I’ve been in awe at the difference between the Korean and Japanese people and my mind has been running over with a desire to have you here with me! My darling Ruthie—I love you so very much! I wonder how God will allow us to travel together!

And a few days later I described what I saw from the window of my train on my way from Tokyo down to Osaka:

The ride was beautiful, even in the rain! Japan doesn’t seem to have much farming, Ruthie—everything looks like a garden! Rice gardens, wheat gardens, peach gardens—it is too beautiful to write, Ruthie. I want you to see Japan sometime, and perhaps the Lord will make this come to be.

The U.S. military operated a series of resort hotels here and there in Japan for the use of troops on leave from Korea and other places in Asia. We stayed in several such hotels, in Tokyo, on Lake Kawaguchi near Mount Fuji, and on Lake Biwa not far from the ancient (and never bombed) imperial city of Kyoto.

We learned to use the public transportation system (trains, busses, taxis), so it was possible for us to see several of the famous sights in Japan. On one trip to Kyoto, cousin Earl and I happened to dine in a very old *tempura* restaurant where the chef informed us in broken English that he was something like the 20th generation in his family to prepare *tempura*. I am sure that we were in a place that is super expensive today, but what did we know?

During my first days in Tokyo, my good churchly friends from basic training days made sure that I was properly introduced to “night life” in Tokyo, as they had been just a few days before. After visiting some fascinating (and innocent) tea rooms and coffee shops, they took me to a jazz “hostess club” called *Blue Note*. I became suspicious when we walked down dark, narrow streets and alleys to find the club, but Japanese cities are full of dark, narrow streets that are entirely safe and innocent, and I still had confidence in the moral uprightness of my colleagues. Until the floor show began and I found myself confronted with a lovely little Japanese lass clad only in a G-string. My “hostess” watched one of my friends squirm and commented to me “He looks like he doesn’t know what he is doing”—which was abundantly true of me, too! I was very sure that what we were doing was not at all pleasing to God and I was very happy when we made our exit from the *Blue Note* after about an hour. My “friends” laughed at me (and themselves, because they had gone through pretty much the same thing a few days before me) for a long time after—and after a while, I could laugh at myself, too. Perhaps it was partly to expiate my guilt, but I described the whole thing in a letter to Ruth. “It was the most miserable hour I have spent in my life,” I told her. I did return to the area on subsequent visits to Tokyo, but to relax and enjoy a coffee shop/tea room that played wonderful classical music. No more G-strings.

Enjoying the sights and learning just a little bit about Japanese culture were important outcomes of my journeys to Japan, but the truly life-shaping experiences for me and, later, our family, were my visits to the Mennonite Brethren missionaries in Ishibashi, part of the suburban city of Ikeda on the northern edge of the Osaka metropolitan area. MB missionary work in Japan had begun in 1949, fewer than ten years before. World War II had ended in 1945 and in 1949 Japan was just beginning its economic recovery. The Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), the inter-Mennonite relief agency, and the Mennonite Brethren foreign mission board collaborated in the establishment of a relief center in Osaka. The two agencies sent workers to serve in the center, including the directors of the center, Henry G. and Lydia Thielman, an MB couple from Canada who were in their forties at that time. The activities of the center included organizing a sewing school to help young Japanese women achieve some degree of economic stability and Bible classes to introduce people in the neighborhood to Christianity (and

the English language). The agreement between the MCC and the MBs was that when relief efforts were no longer needed, the MBs would “follow up” the work that had been begun in Osaka by MCC with the “spiritual” work of establishing churches. Ruth Wiens was the first of a team of MB missionaries to arrive in Japan during the years 1950 to 1954. The other Mennonite mission groups in Japan went off to establish their own work in more rural areas in the north, on the island of Hokkaido (Mennonite Church), on Kyushu (General Conference Mennonites) in the southwest, and Yamaguchi Prefecture (Brethren in Christ) at the western tip of the main Island of Honshu. All of this was part of a great influx of missionaries into Japan in the years just after the end of World War II, partly in response to the invitation of General Douglas MacArthur, who directed the post-war occupation and reconstruction of Japan. General MacArthur, I am quite sure, was more interested in using Christianity to keep Japan from “going communist” than he was in seeing souls saved and churches planted, but whatever mixed motives might have been in his mind, and for their own reasons, many mission agencies sent large numbers of missionaries to Japan in those years and the several Mennonites mission agencies were part of that.

I had not known the MB missionaries in Japan prior to my visits, but I had known about them, since they had done presentations in our church in Reedley and some of them had relatives in our area. In fact, Harry Friesen’s brother, Lee, worked for my father and uncle at Enns Pontiac. So I sort of knew the missionaries as part of our extended MB community. At the time of my visits, the Friesen and Wiens families and “single sister” Ruth Wiens were living in the Ishibashi area, where the MB mission had purchased a large residence that had been owned by a Japanese medical doctor. Other mission families (Krause, Bartel, Balzer) were living in other parts of the Osaka metropolitan area, in accordance with the MB mission strategy of establishing a network of MB congregations near important transportation nodes.

I tried to describe to Ruth my first impressions of Ishibashi as I sat at a table in the missionary residence.

I can look out of the window and see part of the residential district of Ishibashi, (which is) an upper crust district—a sort of West Ave-ish place (a reference to one of the wealthy areas in Reedley), and the homes and gardens are beautiful and oriental—like a story book! ... Within a radius of 1/8 mile I’ve seen an agricultural high school, a girls’ school that must be quite elite, a kindergarten, a village shopping center, two public bath houses, an M.D., a dentist’s office, a movie theater, the electric train depot, a strawberry patch, a fig orchard, a flower garden complete with glass houses—and, Ruthie, this place is fabulous!

I also tried to describe to Ruth what I saw and felt during my first visit to the “village shopping center” (*ichiba*) in Ishibashi with Millie Friesen:

Little shops of every kind—from fish to fruit to china to beauty parlors to gambling dens to shoes—everything in little shops on either side of the narrow, crooked street. I thought, Ruthie, that places like that were just found in pictures in books—but there I was, right in one! I just about flipped!

My first impressions of missionary work were not so positive. I wrote to Ruth: “My head is full of missionary thoughts! I do not think, my darling, that we will ever be missionaries, as pictured by MB standards. Perhaps the Lord will teach me differently, but right now I can’t quite see all of this!” But then, over the course of the next several days, I visited missionaries who were living and working in working class and industrial areas. I sat in on a missionary prayer meeting and was impressed with how deeply they loved and cared for the people that they knew. I went for a bicycle ride around the neighborhood with Harry Friesen and had long visits with Ruth Wiens and Millie Friesen. Roland Wiens drove me out to the MB Nosegawa campsite (an old slaughterhouse) in its beautiful mountain setting among the green trees, near the bank of the Inagawa River. I helped put up a tent for evangelistic meetings near the train station in Ishibashi and was really impressed with the young people in the church who did most of the work in a meeting for a whole tent full of really cute Japanese kids. The young people also introduced me to *udon* (soup with thick Japanese noodles, wrongly spelled “oodon” in my letter to Ruth) and taught me how to use chopsticks.

The MB missionaries were doing what many missionaries did in those days—and some still do today. They conducted worship services on Sunday mornings. These services followed a format that looked very much like worship services in evangelical churches in North America and elsewhere: hymns, Bible readings, prayers, sermon, announcements, collection of offerings, times for fellowship and meals together. They organized Sunday School programs for children, and English language and English Bible classes for students and working people in order to attract new people to the churches. They erected tents and conducted “evangelistic meetings,” often near train stations where there would be a lot of foot traffic. They distributed fliers and “tracts” with simple Christian messages. They organized their network of a few small congregations into the Japan Mennonite Brethren Conference (JMBC) that could accomplish things together that could not be done alone by a local congregation. This soon included a pastoral training program, the development of Christian education materials for children, a camp site and camping programs for various ages, and a denominational paper.

The more I saw of missionary work in Ishibashi, the more impressed I became. Missionary Harry Friesen was teaching English on the nearby Ishibashi campus of the prestigious, national Osaka University (*Handai*) and he introduced me to some of the students who had become Christians. We continued to have contact with some of these students throughout most of the rest of our lives. Ikeda Mitsuo later received his Ph.D. in the U.S. and spent much of his working life with the Minolta Camera Company, later becoming a professor in the Tokyo University of Technology. Ikeda Hiroshi, who was the leader of the KGK (IVCF) group on the *Handai* campus, spent several years in London and other overseas locations as an executive with the Daiwa Bank. Tanaka Jun began his working career with the Kawasaki Shipbuilding Company. When we were living in Kobe, he once invited me to witness the launching of a huge new Kawasaki super-tanker. What a great experience! These, and many others, were highly competent young people who found great meaning in their new Christian faith and life. This seemed to be a really good thing for people who had been devastated by Japan's defeat in the war. I described to Ruth how this defeat had meant not only almost complete material devastation and the destruction of the old political system, but also the end of the social, cultural and religious system in which many had invested their complete faith and confidence. Christianity seemed to provide a new way for them to put their lives back together. The Japanese Christians whom I met seemed to be really serious about this. I was impressed.

But I also had some serious misgivings about missionary work. To Ruth, again:

I told you, and I suppose you could tell that my visit with the missionaries made me think—a lot... I've never considered, seriously, the thought of a foreign mission as a place for me because I couldn't see 'sponging off of the church,' and being just a preacher... because a missionary or a preacher doesn't know what life is all about. He will be in a poor position in understanding the problems of a 'layman'—kind of like a college professor telling you how to meet the problems of an elementary education classroom when he has never had to deal with them himself. So with these thoughts, I've always just sort of passed over the 'full time service' ideas, and reckoned God's will to be a 'full time service' in a regular profession.

But perhaps there might be possibilities for another way to do "mission" work. I reported my response in a conversation with Roland Wiens about the financial problems of the MB mission program. When he told me that the mission was paying salaries with borrowed money and that salaries were arriving weeks late, "I asked Rev. (Roland) Wiens what the situation would be if a person would come to Japan and get a job, and be a 'part-time' missionary, like Vernon Janzen in the Selma Chapel, only different. 'It looks like that's the only way a person could come—as self-supporting,' he told me."

After these reports from Japan, correspondence between Ruth and me about our professional futures added mission service as a possible option, along with teaching and social work. My choices about my education were shaped, in part, by the notion that perhaps we would one day be missionaries of some kind. Little did we know how significantly these early experiences and thoughts in and about Japan would shape all of the rest of our lives and the lives of our children.

MISSIONARY YEARS: 1962-66

During the spring of 1961, we four MB students at Fuller Seminary received a visit from MB “patriarch,” J. B. Toews, who was the executive secretary of the MB Board of Foreign Missions at that time. “J.B.,” who had been the pastor of the Reedley MB church when I was younger, had migrated from Russia to Canada as a young adult and he still carried a kind of European, old-worldly aura about himself. He wore a black suit, overcoat and fedora and he was a very stern, imposing and, for many of us, intimidating presence. During his lifetime he directed most of the major programs of the denomination and he pastored some of the largest churches, so, in many ways he represented much of what it meant to be MB, or at least one version of being MB. He presented to us MB students at FTS information about various ministry opportunities that might be open to us. For Ruth and me, he suggested that we might consider two options in Japan. One possibility was to serve as house parents in the residence for MB missionary kids near the Canadian Academy in Kobe. The other was to do “student evangelism.” We quickly felt that the latter assignment might be very appropriate for us, since we had both been heavily involved with the Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship organization at various times and because I had been in Japan and had been quite impressed with what I had seen happening in the MB work there. We decided to apply for the student evangelism assignment in Japan.

We knew very little about either Japan or about “missions” at that time. Actually, we did not even know all that much about the Mennonite Brethren, since I had been away from the Reedley church most of the time since I was a junior in high school when I started to work in the Selma Chapel. So at one point during my years at Fuller, my Canadian MB friend, George Wiens, and I made an appointment to visit with Rev. Dan Friesen, who was the pastor of the large MB church in Reedley and he was also the chairman of the MB General Conference that included both the Canadian and the U.S. national conferences. We wanted to learn from this MB leader what it might mean to be ministers in the MB denomination. We discussed various topics, most of which seem very remote from the concerns of people in 2021, including the matter of attendance at movies, which was then prohibited by the MB denomination. Rev. Friesen emphasized how important it is in a community like the

Mennonite Brethren to make every effort to avoid anything that might be “offensive,” or a “stumbling block,” to our fellow members. For example, he told us, early in his ministry he had worn his wedding ring while preaching. When a member of the congregation told him that he (or she) had been offended by the ostentation of wearing a gold wedding band in the pulpit, he had taken off his wedding ring and had not worn it since. So, of course an MB minister should not attend movies because that might offend people in the community and weaken the effectiveness of one’s pastoral ministry. We would have to make a choice: attend movies or be part of the MB community. It seemed at the time that being part of the community was more important to us than seeing a movie every once in a while, so Ruth and I stopped attending movies, which I had started to do while I was in the army, far from home, where there was no one around who might be “offended. “

There were other issues that we needed to deal with. There was an application form for me to complete as part of the process leading toward ordination as an MB minister. The form inquired about my theology and my convictions concerning several “ethical issues” such as attending movies and dancing. I made every effort to be open and forthright in what I said about issues concerning which I might be “out of step” with the denomination. I explained that I had grown up without dancing, so I had never danced, but that I could not see any theological or ethical reasons for not doing so. I explained that I had attended movies for a period in my life, so I could see no reason to think of movies as different from other forms of communication and entertainment, such as newspapers, books, magazines, and television. And I explained that I was prepared to refrain from these and other activities (including drinking alcohol and smoking cigarettes) if this was a necessary condition for serving as a member of the MB community. I also explained that I did not accept the dispensational eschatology that was very widespread in MB circles at the time, especially in the U.S. Conference and in the Pacific District Conference, though this position was not part of the official MB confession of faith that had been adopted by the General Conference which included MB churches in both Canada and the U.S. So we were somewhat surprised when no one questioned us about any of these things. The questions came later.

An even bigger hurdle was the matter of Ruth’s baptism. At that time, the MBs required that the spouse of an MB minister must also have been baptized by immersion. As in all branches of the Anabaptist Believers’ Church tradition, including the MBs, the General Conference Mennonite church in which Ruth had grown up understood baptism to be a symbol that the recipient had made an informed and intentional commitment to Christian faith and to the Christian community. But in General Conference

churches, these commitments could be symbolized by sprinkling as well as in the full, underwater immersion baptism that the MBs had adopted in Russia under German Baptist influences. So, since Ruth had been baptized by sprinkling, she would have to be “re-baptized” before we could be accepted for missionary service with the MBs. We were most hesitant to comply with this requirement because to do so seemed to imply that her initial baptism somehow lacked validity. What to do? We had a serious conversation with Ruth’s father. He was less troubled than we were. When he said that in things like this “The stronger person always gives in to the weaker,” we decided that we could accept the MB requirement. In order to avoid in so far as possible being an affront to Ruth’s church, we arranged for her to join a baptismal group in the Pacoima MB church not too far from Pasadena where we were living, far out of sight of people in Reedley. To this day we wonder if we made the right decision about this, but it did allow us to continue on our journey toward mission service in Japan.

Because we were candidates for missionary service, we were asked to attend an MB missionary orientation program in Hillsboro, Kansas during the spring of 1962. I made arrangements to skip about one week of classes at Fuller and my parents agreed to host our three small daughters while we were away, so we drove to Kansas with a carload of fellow MB missionaries who were in the U.S. on “furlough.” The mission expert who was scheduled to do several of the major presentations during the orientation sessions had to cancel at the last minute, so we were treated to a steady diet of Navigator pietism (arranged by Peter Funk from Reedley, good friend of my parents, who was the finance person for the mission at the time and a long-time supporter of the Navigators organization) and zeal for evangelism as presented by Canadian MB evangelist Rev. J. J. Toews, who had a great “passion for souls” that he endeavored to impart to us also. Ruth and I felt very uncomfortable with what we thought was a very unbalanced and not very helpful orientation program and we wondered if we fit in with the MBs at all, so I sought the counsel of two men. Dr. Jake Loewen was a linguist and mission anthropologist teaching at Tabor College at the time. He described for me the work that he and some colleagues had done among tribal peoples in Panama and Colombia that did not fit at all into what we were hearing in our orientation sessions. And I talked with Dr. Lando Hiebert, pastor, Bible professor, and, for a time, chair of the MB mission board. He shared with me in graphic language the discomfort that he felt about the kind of piety that dominated the orientation sessions. These conversations somewhat alleviated our misgivings and helped us to surmise that there might be room for the likes of us in MB missions after all.

In spite of these and other issues and obstacles, we were accepted for missionary service in Japan with the Mennonite Brethren Board of Foreign Missions (later Board of Missions and Service, or BOMAS; since 2015 Mennonite Brethren Mission (MBM); and currently in 2021 known as “Multiply”). After graduating from Fuller in June, 1962, we moved back to Reedley for the summer. One reason for this move was that I was expected to attend a summer session at the Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary (MBBS) in Fresno so that I would be more fully informed about the denomination that I would represent in Japan. I greatly enjoyed the course in Anabaptist history taught by Dr. A. J. Klassen for whom I wrote a paper on the Schleithem Confession (1527), the first formal statement of theological convictions formulated by the Swiss Anabaptists. I understood later that Klassen’s presence in the MBBS faculty was part of a major shift at the seminary from fundamentalism and dispensationalism toward a more open neo-evangelical and Anabaptist orientation.

Another reason for spending the summer in Reedley was to prepare for our big move to Japan, which included packing six 55 gallon drums with all of the “stuff” that we would need for our family during our first six year term in Japan. We were instructed by our soon-to-be missionary colleagues in Japan that we should bring pretty much everything that we would need for ourselves and our three young and growing daughters, including shoes, sweaters, jackets, etc. because products that were available in Japan would not be suitable for us. So that is how we packed our barrels, not even knowing that it was a mistake to take six years-worth of shoes with laces or buckles since in Japan shoes come off and on every time one enters and exits a building. Slip-on shoes worked much better. We were surprised to find upon our arrival that Japanese products were of far better quality than we had been led to expect. So we packed and shipped a lot of “stuff” that we did not really need and never used.

We were ordained as a missionary couple in June of 1962, or to be more precise, I was ordained as a card-carrying MB minister. We left the port of San Francisco on an old WW II era freighter named *Wild Ranger* in August 1962 (**Photos 15 and 16**). I was 27 years old, Ruth was 26, Terri 4 1/2, Connie 2 1/2, and Karen celebrated her first birthday on board the ship on the day we crossed the International Dateline. We now wonder, in retrospect, what we were thinking. We were very young and we must have really felt “called.”

Our family of five was joined on the *Wild Ranger* by three other passengers who were with the Methodist mission. We enjoyed a long friendship with fellow passenger Judy Beatty (later Douglass), who was a short-term Methodist missionary stationed not far from us in Kobe, so we were fellow Japanese language students for a time. We learned immediately upon boarding that the ship was not

really equipped for toddlers, since the side rails consisted of little more than a couple of widely spaced cables. We (Ruth, mostly) had to watch the kids very carefully at all times. The big excitement during our two weeks of travelling due west toward Yokohama was when the ship's baker suffered a heart attack and died. He had baked a cake for Karen's first birthday party in the captain's dining room just a few days before his death. His body was first stored in the ship's freezer until his next-of-kin requested that he be buried at sea since that is where he had spent most of his adult life.

For the ceremony, the ship came to a complete stop. The engines stopped running so it suddenly became very quiet. The ship's captain conducted the brief ceremony, following a manual that ships' captains carry in case of such happenings, and I did a brief meditation (as provided for in the manual). During the ceremony, the baker's body, enclosed in a canvas bag that was weighted with chains and covered with an American flag, rested on a plank between a 55 gallon drum and the side railing of the ship. At the appropriate time, a group of "pall bearers" lifted the end of the plank that was resting on the barrel, holding one end of the flag so that the body-bag slid from under the flag, down the side of the ship and entered the sea with a splash. After a few more moments of silence, the service ended, the engines re-started and our ship slowly resumed its journey. Someone sighted a whale just after the body entered the water, causing the captain to wonder if this was a sign that the baker had been reincarnated as a whale. Whatever the case might be, this burial at sea was a very moving experience.

When we arrived in Yokohama, we were met by MB missionary Jonathan Bartel who had driven a small Japanese station wagon up from Osaka to meet us. We (three adults and three children) piled all of the things we had taken with us in our cabins on the ship (the barrels were shipped on to Kobe separately) into and onto the top of the station wagon and drove to the Yokohama train station to exchange some American dollars for Japanese yen and to use the public rest rooms. This was Ruth's first initiation into how little we all knew about life in Japan. She opened a door to one of the stalls in the restroom only to find that the stool was missing. Assuming that the stall was being repaired, she tried another and then another, concluding, finally, that there are (or were then) no western type toilets in Japanese public restrooms. There is a floor-level fixture over which one squats. Culture shock number one. Of course many other surprises awaited us, some pleasant, some not so much.

Jonathan drove us from Yokohama to Osaka with a one-night stop-over in an inn in Hamamatsu. After brief introductions to the rest of the missionary staff, we settled into the second floor of the large MB mission residence just below the Canadian Academy in Rokko, near the eastern edge of Kobe. Abe and Kay Koop and daughters Cary and Delores from Canada lived on the first floor. The house had

been intended to serve as a dormitory for MB missionary children whose homes were too far away for a daily commute to the Canadian Academy so the Koops had been sent by the mission, just a month or so before we arrived, to serve as house parents for the kids. But the missionary parents had all decided to keep their students at home, so the Koops had no assignment and the house was not needed for use as a hostel. In many ways, we were fortunate to be located there. We had an amazing view from up on *Nagamine-yama* (Long-view Mountain) where we looked down over part of the city and across the bay. There were also many other foreigners living in the neighborhood since it was near the international school, so there were many folks around us who could serve as resources as we began to settle into our new situation.

Our first challenge was to learn to deal with the many complexities of living in Japan as newly arrived foreigners who were almost totally ignorant about the culture and knew nothing at all of the language. Actually, our high level of ignorance about the language and culture was quite typical of how most missionaries arrived in Japan in those days. The assumption was that missionary work was essentially a one-way street: We came to transmit a Gospel message that was both simple and universal. It did not take a high degree of linguistic ability to communicate this plain and simple Christian message. In fact, there was even a *Missionary Handbook* that contained pretty much everything one would need to say in order to present “the Gospel.” The *Handbook* used the Roman alphabet so it was not even necessary to learn to read the written form of the Japanese language, and it was not really very important that we understand the culture of the people to whom we preached since we humans were all sinful creatures and were in pretty much the same boat. “One Gospel for all mankind.”

A sizable portion of the missionary force in Japan consisted of people who had initially been assigned to China, but when that country was “closed” by the communists, they were simply re-routed to Japan instead. Not much attention was paid to the fact that Christian faith might take quite different forms in different cultures—America, China, Japan—and that understanding cultures, both one’s own and the “others,” might be an important part of the missionary enterprise. I do not think that many of us went to Japan thinking that dialog might be part of the process, or that we might actually learn some things that would enrich our own lives. I think we expected that a congregation in Japan would look pretty much like our congregations in small towns like Reedley, California, Corn, Oklahoma and Hillsboro, Kansas, and that the MB conference in Japan would look much the same and do many of the same things that the denomination did back in North America. In retrospect, sending young missionaries without adequate cultural sensitivity or preparation looks a lot like “cultural imperialism.”

One of our biggest early challenges, of course, was to learn to communicate. So we became students in the Japanese language school for missionaries located in a Presbyterian church near the Hankyu Rokko train station at the bottom of our hill. Learning a language as complicated and difficult as Japanese can be very hard on the adult ego. First, we had to watch our kids learn quickly and seemingly effortlessly. Apparently all they had to do was interact with our Japanese maid, watch TV, and play with the Japanese children in our neighborhood and in no time at all they seemed to be fluent, even laughing at the jokes on Japanese TV. Not so with us. We had to endure memorizing things that seemed to be senseless (like something about Abraham Lincoln) and doing exercises that made our stupidity obvious. For example, one day in class I was asked to construct a sentence to practice some grammatical point or other. I was supposed to say “In church we worship (*reihai suru*)” but instead I said “In church we make love (*renai suru*).” Ha, ha, ha. It seemed like the teacher and the classmates who caught on laughed *at* me, not *with* me. And when Ruth thanked a church group for a gift of covers for Japanese floor cushions (*zabuton*), she thanked the group for pants (*zubon*) instead. Ha, ha, ha. As I said, learning a new language as an adult can be hard on the ego. It was easy for us to agree with the opinion attributed to Xavier, the first Jesuit missionary to Japan who arrived in 1549, that the Japanese language was invented by the devil to keep Christianity out of the country.

In order to make it possible for both of us to attend language school and to help us with our orientation to life in Japan, the mission arranged for a live-in maid who was with us as a member of our household for approximately two years (**Photo #17**). Oyama Asako-san was a member of the MB church in Amagasaki, as were several other members of her extended family (including her brother, a brother-in-law, and a nephew, all of whom became MB pastors). Asako-san was enormously helpful to us. She not only took care of our children so well that Karen’s first word was *oisshya*, which is the grunting sound that little Asako-san made when she lifted Karen, who was big for a one year old. She helped us learn things like how to shop, and prepare Japanese meals, and get Terri settled into the local kindergarten. She also taught us many of the intricacies of Japanese culture, such as: It is not polite to blow one’s nose into a handkerchief in public; hot bath water is to be shared with many others, so one must first soap, wash, and rinse *outside* the tub, not in; one does not catch a cold by getting one’s feet wet and cold, but sleeping with one’s mid-section exposed is sure to lead to a stomach ache--and so many other things. She helped us in our first attempts to learn to speak Japanese—though it was more than a little disconcerting to come home with phrases newly learned in our language classes, only to be told by Asako-san, “Oh, we never say it that way anymore.” She graciously tolerated our many

ignorant mistakes. For example, Ruth once brought home a large green bottle that she thought was vinegar because it was in a bottle that looked just like the one Asako-san was using. But Ruth had actually purchased a large bottle of Japanese *sake* (rice wine), which caused Asako-san to wonder what kind of people these new MB missionaries were, drinking alcohol (which was absolutely prohibited, of course). This was but one of many occasions for great laughter, mostly at our expense.

Asako-san was one of many Japanese people with whom we developed close friendships that lasted for many years. We visited her in her home in Kinosaki on the Japan Sea coast after her marriage; we helped host the wedding of her daughter here in Fresno many years later; and we visited Asako-san and another daughter in their homes on the island of Shikoku. In these and other later contacts, when our age differences were less important and our relationships were less complicated by a superior-subordinate arrangement, we realized that Asako-san was an even brighter and more creative (and funny) person than we had known during those first years when she was our maid. When she was with us in Fresno for her daughter's wedding, for example, as we drove through the countryside under a full summer moon in a cloudless sky, she spontaneously created a *haiku* (Japanese 17-syllable poem) that exactly fit the situation. Her *haiku* is probably hilarious only in Japanese, and I cannot translate it into 17 syllables in English, but here is the best I can do:

Kumo ga nai

There is no cloud

Matsu mo nai

There is no pine tree

Furezuno no tsuki.

Only the Fresno moon.

Our routine during our first months in Japan was to be driven down the hill in the morning with the Koops by senior missionaries Roland and Ann Wiens (who were doing a refresher course in the Japanese language after being in the U.S. on furlough) in the mission's 1948 Chevrolet panel truck (van). We were in class until around noon, then home for lunch and studying (and taking care of life) in the afternoons and evenings. Terri attended the Japanese kindergarten just down the hill in the mornings and the kids played with the two Koop children and others in the neighborhood who were about the same age. On Sundays we alternated with the Koops in making our introductory rounds of the MB churches in the Osaka area while the other couple stayed with our five little girls, and then we settled more-or-less regularly in the Ishibashi church, which was more than one hour away by train. We occasionally visited the historic old international and interdenominational Kobe Union Church near the center of downtown Kobe.

After approximately one year with these arrangements, we decided to move closer to the Ishibashi church where I was teaching English Bible classes and I was also teaching some classes at the nearby Osaka University. Since we were changing to a different Japanese language school located near Nishinomiya, and since the kids could attend preschool most anywhere, we rented a house in Toyonaka, a city that neighbors Ishibashi. Terri and Connie became students in the nearby Baika preschool and kindergarten. Another factor in our decision to make this move was that the Koops had taken long term teaching positions in the Canadian Academy and we felt that our presence on the second floor of their home was not ideal for them nor for us. We lived in Toyonaka for approximately one year. **(Photo #49)**

Our year in Toyonaka was interrupted by my emergency appendectomy during the summer of 1964. If someone else would have had the stomach pains that I felt, I would have performed the simple test for appendicitis that I had learned during my army medical training, but I just assumed that I was suffering from gas pains and the problem would go away. Besides, it was a weekend and we did not want to bother the MD in the small clinic near our house. By Monday morning I was in serious distress, so we called the neighborhood doctor, who rode over on his motor scooter, and urged that I go to a hospital immediately. We needed to get to an international hospital since family members were expected to provide a lot of care and support (including food) for patients in Japanese hospitals in those days and we could not do that, so by the time we could arrange for care for our children and Jonathan Bartel could drive us to the Roman Catholic Kaisei Hospital in Kobe, my appendix had burst and I was in shock. Surgery was successful, but I remained in the hospital for about ten days. The whole experience was extra frightening because just before we left for Japan my 16 year old cousin, Gerald Enns, had died in Reedley after an appendectomy that went awry. We knew that my parents would be terribly anxious if they knew what had happened to me, so we did not notify them until it was very clear that I would be OK. Everything turned out fine, but it was a harrowing experience to go through so early in our time in Japan. The total cost of my 10-day hospitalization and medical care was about \$145, including the phone call to California.

For a variety of reasons, we decided to enroll our children in the Canadian Academy rather than a local Japanese school. And so, rather than have our children make the long commute between Toyonaka and their school in Kobe, we moved back closer to their school and I did the longer commutes. We were fortunate to be able to rent a most remarkable (and famous) old Japanese house that had been designed and built in 1933 by Tanizaki Jun'ichiro, one of Japan's best-known modern writers. After

we left, a faculty couple from the Canadian Academy rented the house. During their time as residents, NHK, Japan's public TV broadcasting corporation (like PBS), broadcast a filmed presentation on the Tanizaki house. Unfortunately, the historic old house totally collapsed during the great Kobe earthquake in 1994. The Kressels and the Bunya family in the attached part of the house were fortunate to escape with their lives. There were serious conversations about rebuilding the grand old house as a museum in honor of Tanizaki, but neither the building materials of appropriate quality, nor the craftsmen with the required skills, nor the enormous amount of money that the project would have cost were available, so the idea was dropped.

During those initial years in Japan, we were not only learning to adjust to a new and very different language and culture, but we were also learning to adjust to the MB version of mission work in Japan. As I mentioned earlier, the mission strategy focused on planting a network of congregations strategically located throughout the greater Osaka area and to support this "conference" of congregations (the Japan Mennonite Brethren Conference, JMBC) with a pastoral training program, campsite (Nosegawa) and camping program, denominational newspaper (*Yoki-otozure*, or "Good Visitor") and Christian education materials for children, among other things. But it was clear that the primary focus of mission efforts was on "evangelism," which took a variety of forms. I mentioned earlier that missionaries and Japanese converts worked together to invite new people to respond to the gospel and join the local congregations by distributing tracts and fliers, conducting evangelistic "crusades," often in tents set up near train stations or other high-traffic areas. Missionaries also hosted classes—sewing, initially, and then later English, cooking, and other things. Japanese pastors added calligraphy classes, and later, computer instruction for people in the neighborhood. Some congregations hosted other classes of various kinds, including child-rearing and support groups for young mothers.

For many years, first the mission and then the Japanese Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches (JMBC) also sponsored an early morning evangelistic radio broadcast called *Asa-no-hikari* (Morning Light). A "Radio Evangelist" was hired for this ministry and a small office staff took care of correspondence with people who responded to invitations to send questions or other responses to the broadcasts. Listeners and others were invited to a monthly gathering for an evening of "Songs and Message" in a large auditorium in the center of Osaka City. Part of the idea was to encourage people to consider Christian faith by demonstrating that large numbers of ordinary fellow Japanese citizens were Christians—an important point to make in a society where fewer than one half of one percent of

the population is affiliated with a Christian church of any kind and Christianity has long been suspect as a “foreign” religion that does not really fit the Japanese situation. Some people said that Christianity “stinks like butter,” which was not part of the traditional Japanese diet. Many Japanese people also have the impression that Christianity is for eccentrics and misfits in a society that values conformity and “fitting in.” (A well-known saying is: “The nail that sticks up gets pounded down.”) People who sent notes to the radio office or attended one of the evening meetings were encouraged to contact an MB church in their area. In this way prospective converts were encouraged to move toward more personal contacts with pastors and other church people, and, hopefully, conversion to Christianity some day. We were never directly involved in the radio ministry but in the winter after our arrival we were asked to take our three small daughters to stand on one of the main bridges (where there was a lot of foot traffic) in downtown Osaka to hand out tracts because the missionaries were sure that our three cute little American girls would be quite the attraction. We found a reason why this would not work for us.

It did not take us very long to realize that in this and many other ways we were not located at the same place on the theological map, as I sketched it above, as most of our fellow MB missionaries. Our many years of involvement with Inter Varsity Christian Fellowship, three years of study at the Neo-evangelical Fuller Theological Seminary, and our attraction to a recently emerged “recovery” of an Anabaptist vision all contributed to a reconstruction of our understandings of what the Christian faith and life were all about. Several anecdotes will illustrate something of the nature of some of our differences with our fellow MB missionaries.

1. Religious and Cultural Boundaries. Early in our stay in Japan the Koops and we noticed some posters pasted onto power poles in our neighborhood. They seemed to be ads for some kind of ballet, but we could not yet read what the posters were about. So one morning on our ride down to our language classes we asked our more senior missionary friends about the posters. The answer was that a Russian ballet company was coming to our town, so we asked what the dates and location were, thinking that we might want to attend. The next morning we were informed that we missionaries in Japan must be very careful about keeping ourselves clearly separate from the “world.” Attendance at cultural events like a ballet would not be appropriate. In fact, the missionaries had discouraged Japanese MB Christians from singing in a large community choir that was preparing to present Handel’s *Messiah* in one of the big public concert halls. True evangelical Christians should not participate in an event like this since the choir would include some members of “liberal,” “modernist”

churches, and probably even some non-Christians. Another problem was that the instrumental group that accompanied the choir sometimes played jazz. Of course true Christians, we were told, would never visit a Shinto Shrine or Buddhist Temple, nor would they participate in family funerals and memorials which were almost always done in accordance with Buddhist traditions. In fact, converts were encouraged to burn the Buddhist family altar if they were responsible for one. We could not agree that these were appropriate ways to draw boundaries between the church and the “world.”

2. Missionary Assignment. As I mentioned, we were sent to Japan by J. B. Toews and the MB mission board to do “student evangelism,” perhaps through a student center that would be built near the Ishibashi Campus of the national Osaka University, near the Ishibashi MB church and near the neighborhood where several of the church members and MB missionaries lived. Approximately one year after our arrival in Japan the time came to discuss our ministry assignment in more detail. We received quite a shock when we were informed that the notion of a special student evangelism worker was the idea of MB mission administrators in North America and was not supported by the missionaries and Japanese pastors on the field. “Why should one segment of the population have a special worker?” was the question. There is only one gospel for all mankind, so why should there be a special worker for one specific group, like university students? Should there also be special workers for other groups like housewives, or bankers, or shopkeepers? So I was asked to assist one of the local church plants that needed a pastor. My response was that I had no experience, no special preparation, and no sense of “call” to be a pastor. I had been sent with a specific assignment and did not feel that I should change that so quickly. By this time the MB mission administration in Hillsboro, Kansas, had changed, so we had little support from the “home office” at that time. In fact, the Minutes of the MB Board of Foreign Missions meeting in the fall of 1964 include the following concerning the “Status of the Field” in Japan:

A note of optimism, courage and trust in God seems to be the tone of the letters and reports in general from this field. There are, however, personnel problems that need to be overcome. Some of the late missionaries are having some difficulty in adjusting to the program set by the Missionary Fellowship and the Japanese conference leadership. The student work detached from a church program cannot be accepted by the Japanese brethren. It is said that those sent by the Board for student work had not been requested by the field, nor cleared with them sufficiently. Those sent for student work lack experience in church or any Christian work and therefore the Japanese leadership is asking them to now accept an assignment with the national church for a season for orientation. They need our prayers.

So the Board acknowledged that they had not obtained the affirmation of the folks on the field before they sent us to Japan as student workers. That was painful, but for better or for worse, we did not accept this change in assignment.

That matter passed, but the question of what kind of student ministry remained. At least some of the missionaries supported the idea of a student center, so one day we went to look at a residence not too far from Osaka University that might be purchased and converted into a meeting place for students. All of our experiences of working with university students had been with IVCF and that was what we had in mind in going to Japan. IVCF conducts its activities on campuses and in other nearby meeting places, so I imagined teaching part-time here and there and meeting with students on campus or in nearby church facilities. The Ishibashi MB church near Osaka University offered one such venue and the Nagase MB church was right next door to Kinki University, a large, private school (that did not enjoy a particularly positive reputation). By meeting on campuses, in nearby facilities, and camps of various kinds at the MB Nosegawa camp we would also be able to support KGK (the Japanese version of IVCF) and perhaps other churches than just the MBs, we thought (**Photo #18**). That is generally the shape that our work took during the next couple of years. Later missionary Harry Friesen headed a very successful ministry to university students in a house near the *Handai* campus in Ishibashi that was converted to serve as a student center. Specialized university student work seemed to be OK after all, and, in fact, the missionaries later requested two or three additional couples, trained by Campus Crusade for Christ, to serve as student workers in Japan. Basing the work in a student center proved to be a productive approach. A number of students who participated in Harry Friesen's program became members of the Ishibashi church (and perhaps other churches, too) and some became MB pastors.

There were a couple of reasons why we were resistant to the idea of establishing a center for university students. One reason was that after just one year in Japan we did not feel prepared to purchase and build (or remodel) a facility and all of the costs and complications that come with constructing and operating such an institution. And, more fundamentally, we were so convinced that we should contribute to the work of local congregations that we were worried about building a separate institution that did not have direct ties to a local congregation.

An interesting aside is that when the mission sold the property in which Harry Friesen's student center was housed, the buyer happened to be a favorite former student of mine at Osaka Shoin Women's College and her husband for use as a chefs' school. Our former student told the Friesens that she and her husband purchased the house under conditions that were favorable to the Friesens and the mission

as an expression of appreciation for her relationship with Ruth and me. It is a small world, even in Osaka, Japan.

3. The Gospel and Peace. Anti-war sentiments were very strong in Japan in the years following the end of World War II in 1945. The great majority of the Japanese people seemed to genuinely embrace the “Peace Article” in the constitution that was written for them by General MacArthur and the Allied Occupation. Article 9 renounced the right of the state to have any military forces and to engage in war. Many students and other young people were adamantly opposed when Japan, with the support and encouragement of the U.S. because we were engaged in the Cold War against communism and Japan was our ally, began to develop “Self Defense Forces” that appeared to be in violation of their own constitution. These pacifist sentiments seemed to be a natural point of convergence between Japanese young people and the Anabaptist/Mennonite understanding that love and peace-making are at the heart of what it means to be a Christian, so the various groups of Mennonite missionaries and pastors in Japan cooperated in sponsoring an occasional “peace seminar” intended primarily to attract university students. In 1965 it was the turn of the MBs to host the inter-Mennonite peace seminar. It seemed natural that I would be involved in the planning of this seminar, so Kurita Fumio and I together made plans and arrangements for representatives of the various Mennonite groups in Japan (and others) to gather at the Nosegawa MB camp just outside of Osaka. Kurita-sensei was the MB evangelist whose main assignment was to conduct evangelistic series in MB churches in the area, but he was also involved, on his own, in efforts to work toward reconciliation between Japan and Korea, two nations that had a long history of conflict.

We thought we had everything properly negotiated and arranged for the peace seminar when I received a phone call from one of the leaders of our MB missionary group informing us that the mission leadership was opposed to our going ahead with the peace seminar, which was scheduled to begin in just a few days. The reason for the concern was that an over-emphasis on peace was not consistent with MB theology and that seminars of this sort can lead to cooperation with people who were liberal and not truly evangelical (fundamentalist version). I remember that I was very irritated and replied that the timing of their objection was all wrong since arrangements were already complete and participants who were traveling from distant parts of Japan would have already purchased their tickets. Kurita-sensei and I had kept the mission informed about our plans and it was simply too late to raise objections. We went ahead with the seminar, which I remember as a positive experience. Being confronted in this way by the senior missionaries was difficult enough for me, but I have always suspected that this event

was an even more serious “loss of face” for Kurita-san, who left the MBs not long afterward and became a successful business man, conducting an import-export business with several countries in the Middle East.

4. Movies. As I indicated above, Rev. Dan Friesen made it clear to us that attending movies was something that MBs did not do in those days. So we stopped attending movies, explaining to ourselves and others that we chose to give higher priority to maintaining solidarity with the MB community than attending an occasional movie. I tried to make this clear in my application materials for missionary service. At one point during our first term in Japan, I was invited to “fellowship” with the youth group in one of our MB churches. During a time of informal discussion with the young people, the question of attending movies came up. I repeated the official line several times, explaining that the MB position was that members should not attend movies and that we were content to refrain from attendance because of the value we placed on maintaining good relationships with the community. But, when I was pressed hard to express my own personal opinion, I finally did, explaining that my personal view was that a movie is simply one form of communication or entertainment, similar to newspapers, books, magazines and television, and that the real task of a church should be to help members to be discerning in their choices and responses to what they expose themselves to. As I recall, it was the very next day when the leadership group of the MB mission appeared in our living room to chastise me for stepping out of line. I had no right to express my personal opinion on matters like this because it undermined what the missionaries were teaching their members. Their declaration that they could not welcome me into their churches if I could not abide by this continues to reverberate in my memory.

This matter, too, was so serious at the time that it made it onto the agenda of the MB Board of Foreign Missions. Minutes from the spring, 1964 meeting of the board include the following:

Bob Enns

An inquiry has been received from the Japan MAC regarding the attitude of Bob Enns toward attending movies. The Board is asked to note and react to his statement in his doctrinal questionnaire regarding this matter.

Motion 64-F-70: The motion was made, seconded and passed that the Board responds as follows:

We as a Board acknowledge that we have read his statement, but that we have not been careful enough in scrutinizing the doctrinal statement of Brother Enns. We pray that by the grace of God he will change his attitude and expect him to commit himself in writing to the conference position in practice and in teaching. The letter to the field regarding

this matter should present to Brother Enns Scripture verses and quotes from our Confession of Faith regarding this matter.

Motion 64-F-71: In this connection the motion was also made, seconded and passed that the Board should write to other missionaries and candidates who have made general or unclear statements in their doctrinal questionnaires and ask them to make the required commitments in writing.

Neither Ruth nor I can remember ever receiving a note like this and I found nothing in my files in the mission archives, so we do not know what happened, but in this and other matters the Mission board seems to have positioned itself as the conference watch-dog for the most conservative understanding of what the Christian faith and life were all about. Again, this did not seem to Ruth and me to be an appropriate way to define the boundaries around Christian community, nor between the “church” and the “world.”

5. Relationships with Other Mennonites in Japan. In addition to the inter-Mennonite peace seminars that I just described, Ruth and I enjoyed other good relationships with our fellow non-MB Mennonite missionaries in Japan. Early in our stay in Japan we travelled to the northern island of Hokkaido for an all Japan Mennonite Missionary Fellowship, where we greatly enjoyed seeing a new and more remote part of Japan. The group stayed in an old Japanese hot spring resort near Lake Toya, which was great fun. While there we developed new friendships with colleagues from the other Mennonite and Brethren in Christ groups, with whom we felt a great kinship of spirit. Our good relationships with friends in the other Mennonite groups added to the strain in our relationships with our own fellow MB missionaries, who later failed to host the all-Japan gathering of Mennonites when it was their turn. In fact, correspondence in the mission archives indicates that there were on-going concerns on the part of the MB missionaries in Japan concerning relationships with the other Mennonite mission groups, who were thought to be too “liberal” and ecumenical.

“The church in the garage” provides another example of the tight boundaries the MB missionaries drew around their new Christian community in Japan. Like the MBs, the early General Conference Mennonite missionaries attended the Japanese language school in Kobe where we later studied. During the years when they were in language studies, the GC missionaries conducted English classes and other activities in a garage that was on the grounds of the house where the missionaries lived. A small congregation resulted from these efforts. When the GC missionaries completed their language studies, they moved far southwest to the island of Kyushu where they commenced their mission work, leaving behind the small “church in the garage” without clear pastoral leadership and with only remote

connections with their sister congregations far away in Kyushu. The GC missionaries approached the MB missionaries about “adopting” this small “orphan” congregation, but the MBs were not interested. The reason was, as it was explained to us later, that some of the GC missionaries were more “liberal” than the MBs and the MBs preferred to build their own work from scratch without having to deal with the complications of a group that had begun with a somewhat different theology. We visited the still small “church in the garage” many years later during one of our sojourns in Kobe. As far as we know, it is still there, struggling along with lay leadership. There is nothing wrong with a congregation being very small and with only lay leadership, but we were always sorry that the MBs had defined their boundaries so tightly and so narrowly that they could not incorporate this small group into their community of churches.

There was another small, Anabaptist-related congregation in the Osaka area pastored by Kadota-sensei, who was an ex-MB pastor and teacher in the cooperative (MB and two Baptist missions) Osaka Biblical Seminary. I remember a troubling conversation with Kadota-san that happened over lunch when he was a student in the MB school and I was a newly arrived missionary in Japan. He wanted to know if I agreed with his MB missionary-teachers who had told him that he was not permitted to read (in German) the works of Karl Barth and Emil Brunner. I responded that I had enjoyed reading Brunner, especially, when I was a student at Fuller, so I could not understand this prohibition. Kadota-sensei left the MBs after a time and established his own “independent Anabaptist” congregation (an oxymoron, I told him) where we were surprised to find a number of former MBs (including former evangelist Kurita-san) gathered as members when we visited in 1999. As an indication that patterns of overlapping relationships characterized much of MB church life in Japan as in our old world in North America, Kadota-sensei’s wife was the sister of our maid, Oyama Asako-san and a brother and nephew were MB pastors. So Kadota-sensei could never really leave the MB world entirely.

6. Vacations. The great divide between conservative and liberal missionaries in Japan was apparent even in where missionaries spent their vacations. More liberal missionaries gathered in cabins on the shores of Lake Nojiri in the mountains in Nagano Prefecture while conservatives met in the mountain resort area of Karuizawa, not too far away. The MB mission purchased a large mountain vacation house in Karuizawa that had once been owned by a German company for use during summer vacations by their employees. MB missionaries were active in the leadership of the Christian meetings that were held on the Karuizawa conference grounds during the summers, including “deeper life” meetings that were conducted by a very pious group known as Keswick that originated in England. Since several

MB mission families were eager to attend the conferences at the same time, the large house in Karuizawa was divided into numerous separate apartments, each with its own make-shift kitchen facility. Since the residence was available, and since we were part of the MB mission, we attended one conference in Karuizawa. We felt very uncomfortable with both the theology and the style of the meetings in Karuizawa. Since some of the GC Mennonite missionaries vacationed in Nojiri, we joined them and our numerous other Methodist, Presbyterian, and etc. missionary friends for some very memorable and enjoyable family vacations. One year, when we arrived we found many dried, dead birds here and there in the cabin we rented. The birds had apparently entered the cabin through the chimney but could not find their way back out. Since we were the first to occupy the cabin after the long, cold winter, the dead birds were there to greet us. Watching a nighttime fireworks display out on the lake was great fun, too. But our choices of vacation venues did not add to good relationships with our fellow MB missionaries.

If these sad tales typify some of our initial experiences as MB missionaries in Japan, it would not be unreasonable to ask why we remained on “the field” as long as we did. One reason was that we had committed ourselves to a full term of service, which at that time was six years (later changed to three) so we did not want to quit mid-term. But we also had so many positive experiences that we not only stayed, but we subsequently returned to Japan many times. I will list just a few observations and anecdotes that will illustrate some of the many positive aspects of our early missionary years in Japan.

1. MB Mission Success. I have already indicated that Japan has been a very difficult place to plant Christian churches. After an early “Christian Century” of quite successful Roman Catholic missionary work in Japan (1549 - 1649) when as many as 10% of the population became Christians, and after more than 140 years of mission work during the modern period of missions in Japan (1872 - present), fewer than one half of one percent of the population is associated with a Christian church of any kind. In this very challenging environment, the MB missionaries were comparatively successful in their work. Membership in MB churches grew steadily from the beginning in 1950 to the year 2000 when membership reached approximately 2,500 in about 30 congregations, but then a pattern of slow decline in membership began and that pattern of decline continues in 2021. Of course there are larger, more established Christian denominations in Japan, but relative to its size, few mission organizations in Japan realized even this level of success.

Of course there might be other more “spiritual” ways to explain why the MBs were more successful than many other mission groups, but my impression is that they were successful, in part at least, because

the MB missionaries brought two characteristics that many of the Japanese people who converted and joined their churches found attractive. The first was a high level of personal character, confidence and commitment. The missionaries knew what they believed and they were clear and forthright in sharing with others their deeply held religious convictions. Some of the missionaries also had very dramatic personal stories to tell. Roland Wiens and Jonathan Bartel had grown up in China as sons of pioneer MB missionaries. Roland, with his wife, Ann Friesen Wiens (Ann was missionary Harry Friesen's sister.), had returned to China as missionaries themselves but they had to leave, in very dramatic fashion, because of the communist takeover, so the MB mission board sent them to Japan instead. Jonathan's oldest brother, Loyal (1901-1971), remained alone in a small house and garden in a remote village in China after his family and virtually all other foreigners left China when Chairman Mao Tse Tung established his version of a communist society. Loyal lived through the many changes that happened in China, including the Cultural Revolution. He rejected all pleas to visit his "home" in America, or even to meet his family in Japan, until his death in 1971. The missionaries, like the Jesus they preached, demonstrated a high degree of personal character and many Japanese found in this an antidote for the chaos and disorientation that they experienced following defeat in WW II, in the same way that many Japanese *samurai* (warriors) had found Christianity attractive in the tumultuous years after the Meiji Restoration in 1868.

A second reason for MB mission success was the missionaries' commitment to working cooperatively. The missionaries worked collaboratively (with some stresses and strains, of course), and they taught their members to practice these same virtues in their activities within their congregations and as they worked together cooperatively in the Japan Mennonite Brethren Conference. As I said, during the early years of the MB mission and the JMBC, the boundaries were very tightly defined and there was not much room for deviation from what was decided by "the Conference," so several Japanese pastors and lay members and some of us new MB missionaries left. But these characteristics of personal character and commitment to community were attractive to many Japanese people who had recently experienced an almost complete collapse of their world as they had known it. The missionaries and the Jesus they preached provided a new model for them to emulate as individuals and the church provided a new "family" or "village" to replace the communities they had lost. But these personal and communal needs became less urgent as the trauma that the war had brought receded into the past, and most younger Japanese people were no longer looking for the tight structures of the old world. As in many other places in the world, the openness to change and the personal freedoms of the new world looked

increasingly attractive, so church growth slowed and then membership began to decline. But there was a sense of excitement in the air during the early years when we served with the MB mission in Japan.

2. Friends. I have already mentioned our friendship with our maid, Oyama Asako-san, but there were many other Japanese people with whom we enjoyed rewarding relationships that enriched our lives. I will mention just a few of the many who have been very important people in our lives. Agemi Toyoko-san was the Koop's maid. She and Asako-san lived in the same house with the Koops and us during our first year in Japan, so we became good friends with both women. Toyoko-san wore Ruth's gown (which was lost shortly thereafter) for her wedding and we remained in contact with her for 50 years. She suffered for years trying to be supportive of her son who struggled with the Japanese affliction called *hikikomori*, a uniquely Japanese pattern of extreme social withdrawal.

Arita Masaru followed Harry Friesen as the pastor of the MB church in Ishibashi and he was one of the leaders of the pastoral training school. Arita-sensei graduated from Momoyama University, an Anglican school, so he brought to his life and pastoral ministry with the MBs a complex mix of past influences, including difficult experiences as a student during wartime. He was a very thoughtful and pious man, somewhat of a “mystic” perhaps. He was also clearly the man to whom his fellow MB pastors looked for spiritual and organizational leadership. We had great respect for him and we were saddened when he was afflicted with a stroke and was unable to continue in his leadership role. The consensus was that his stroke was the result of overwork. We also enjoyed many years of friendship with his wife, Teiko-san, and our kids played with the Arita children during church in Ishibashi and at the campground in Nosegawa (**Photo #19**). Arita-sensei passed away in 1991 and Teiko-san died early in 2019.

Another Japanese person for whom I had great respect was Harada Tomoyuki, the Osaka University Professor who was my supervisor when I taught part time at *Handai*. He was later instrumental in helping us arrange teaching positions at Osaka Shoin Women's College. My last attempt to contact Harada-sensei was in 1991 when I called his home one evening from our temporary residence on the campus of Kwansei Gakuin University. His daughter answered the phone and when I introduced myself, she informed me that her father had just passed away. I was a few days too late. Reflecting on the importance of these and many other Japanese people in our lives reminds me why we remained in Japan during those early years—and why we returned again time after time during the years that followed.

There were also fellow foreigners who lived and worked in Japan with whom we enjoyed rewarding friendships. Again, I will very briefly mention only a few. Fellow MB missionary Ruth Wiens did not quite fit the MB missionary pattern as I have described it. She graduated from Wheaton College so she was a more broadly ecumenical evangelical than many of the other more fundamentalistic and separatist MB missionaries, and she was wise enough to generally avoid the kinds of controversies in which we often found ourselves embroiled. Jim and Gretchen Patterson were missionaries with the General Conference (“Swedish”) Baptist denomination that cooperated, for a time, with the MBs (plus the North American (“German”) Baptist denomination) in a pastoral training school known as the Osaka Biblical Seminary. Jim taught at the Seminary and we found in him and Gretchen a warm friendship until she passed away not many years after they returned to the US. Methodist missionaries Frank and Martha Kuhlman were for many years leaders in the Kobe Union Church and key members of the faculty of the Palmore Institute, both in downtown Kobe. Among many other things, Frank was a “birder” and he and Martha were active supporters of Amnesty International, as well as many other liberal causes that advocated for the human rights of minorities of various kinds. Our Karen and Maija Kuhlman were classmates and friends during Karen’s time as a student in the Canadian Academy. We met Presbyterian missionaries, Winton and Kitty Enloe, at the Kobe Union Church and from them we began to learn to appreciate traditional Japanese furniture and other things. And then there was our very complicated friend, Robert Kellen, one-time Roman Catholic missionary in Japan who lost his faith, dropped out of the church and married a Japanese woman with whom he had two children. He worked for a time in an English conversation school and then for years in a large Japanese advertising agency where he could use his aptitude for the creative use of words in a way that made no pretense of doing “good,” as had been expected in his work in the church and in language schools. Our friendship with Bob and Fujiko lasted for many years in Japan and in the U.S. until they both passed away, Fujiko in an automobile accident and Bob from cancer.

3. Guests. We greatly enjoyed hosting two sets of visiting dignitaries from the MB constituencies in North America. We hosted many others, too, but I am now reviewing some of the positive experiences during our early years in Japan. Dr. Frank C. Peters was a pastor and an MB conference leader in both Canada and the U.S. He served for a time as faculty member (psychology) and also as president of Tabor College in Kansas. Rev. Marvin and Mary Helen Hein also visited us during hot and humid July, 1965. Marvin was one of the leading MB ministers of his generation. At the time of their visit, Marvin was the pastor of the Hillsboro, Kansas MB church, one of the largest MB congregations in North

America. The Heins' Japan visit was the final stop during ten-weeks of round-the-world travel that included visits to several MB mission fields. As they had done elsewhere, Marvin and Mary Helen spent time with the missionary staff (including us), met many of the leaders of the JMBC, and did some sightseeing. A highlight of the Hein's time with Ruth and me was a train trip that the four of us took to the large Imperial Shrine in Ise, where we happened to have the good fortune of staying in a fine old Japanese inn (*ryokan*) in which the Emperor of Japan had once been a guest. We had the joy of teaching the Heins some of the pleasures of the Japanese bath (*ofuro*) and cuisine. We were also happy that they gave "permission" for our daughters to attend a movie with the Glenn family with whom they stayed during our trip to Ise. As will be clear later, attending movies was a matter of great controversy in MB circles in those days, so we welcomed the Heins' relatively enlightened attitude on this and other matters.

In his autobiography (2006), Marvin described many of the experiences that they had during their global travels, including some of his observations about Japan. In a brief "Postscript" appended to his travelogue, Marvin reported that several weeks after his return to Kansas, he was invited to report to the MB mission board some of what he had learned about the work of the mission on the various fields that they had visited. I will quote most of Marvin Hein's "Postscript," because it offers another perspective on our situation as MB missionaries in Japan.

I gave a seven-page report orally. Six pages were very affirming and complimentary about the work of MBMS around the world. On one page I critiqued the theological approach of our missionaries in Japan. My contention was that we were trying to establish a church with a theology like we had in North America fifty years ago. To be specific, our missionaries were teaching a fundamentalistic, dispensational theology that didn't represent the current MB model. I illustrated my point by saying that in the Osaka MB Seminary no books giving any other view of eschatology were even allowed in the library.

I was in trouble. The Board called one of the missionaries home from Dallas, Texas, where he was in school, and I was put on the carpet. My mistake was that I ever agreed to report. The Mission Board had not paid a cent of my travel expense and so I did not really owe them anything. The truth of the matter was that we had spent too much time with the Bob Ennses, who were at odds with the other missionaries, and we had been wrongly influenced.

Neither Dr. Peters nor the Heins came to Japan primarily to be educated or entertained by us, of course, but we do think that checking up on us was part of their agenda. They were well aware that our

relationships with our fellow MB missionaries were not going all that well. By the time of their visits, Ruth and I were suffering with deep doubts about whether we fit into the MB world at all. So we were delighted to discover that we were very much on the same page as these leading MB folks from North America. We were refreshed to know that we were not out of step with these thoughtful and broad-minded MB leaders. Our long conversations with them gave us new energy to carry on. We were sorry to learn, many years later, that we had gotten Marvin Hein into hot water with the mission board. We always had a lot of respect for him.

4. Work Assignment. We were not always sure what our job was supposed to be, but the work that we did led to some very interesting experiences. For example, fairly early in our time in Japan, MB missionary friend, Ruth Wiens, asked me to take over some of her English classes for university students in the Nagase MB church right next door to Kinki University. One of the students in the class was actually a student in the Foreign Language University in Kobe majoring in English but he was in this class because his home was not far from Kinki University and the Nagase church. I taught Inobe-san and a group of his friends in Kobe later on, and they once invited me to join them on a ski trip to a small ski area near the Japan Sea where one of the students had relatives. My feet were too big for any of the ski boots that were available, so I used a pair of rubber irrigation boots that we clamped the skis onto. It sort of worked. This proved to be the only time in my life that I have skied. The group of us stayed in an upstairs room in a farmer's house. After a very hot bath (*ofuro*) and dinner provided by the farmer's wife, we sat around the low table with a hot charcoal burner under a blanket that covered the table (*kotatsu*). We talked and played games into the night—with the windows wide open and ice cycles hanging from the roof just outside our windows. The effects of soaking in a *hot* Japanese bath are long-lasting, indeed. I cite just this one experience to illustrate the point that through our work we met a great variety of fascinating people with whom we shared many interesting experiences. I might also note that several years ago we re-established contact with Inobe-san, who had spent his adult life working in the U.S.

5. Institutions for the Expatriate Community. During our early years in Japan, we had two main points of contact with the international community. The first was the Canadian Academy which I have already mentioned. It was a truly international school, kindergarten through grade 12, with a generally American curriculum, located high on a mountainside overlooking Kobe City and Harbor. CA students were from families who were in Japan as diplomats, business people, teachers, medical doctors, missionaries—and even some professional baseball players from the U.S. CA was expensive and the

expectations of the parents were high, so our kids received a very fine education there. Terri claimed that she did not learn anything at all in middle school in Fresno because she had covered it all through grade six at CA. The school was not perfect, though. Karen once had an unreasonably strict teacher who kept the poor little kids in class with their heads down on their desks and would not let them go out for the beginning of the big school sports festival because they had stepped out of line a bit. But, for the most part, we could not have wished for better educational and other cross-cultural experiences for our children.

The Kobe Union Church was an ecumenical and international congregation located near the heart of the port city of Kobe. It was truly international because the facilities had long been shared with a German congregation and the membership was made up of people from around the world—including a significant number of Japanese people. Given the acrimonious divisions that exist within the larger Christian community, it is not easy to sustain a congregation that is truly ecumenical, but Kobe Union came close to doing just that. Every attempt was made to maintain a balance between liberal and conservative members on the board that provided leadership, and there seemed to be an understanding that there would be an alternation between a more liberal and a more conservative pastor. Of course few really fundamentalist Christians could accept arrangements such as this, but there did seem to be a strong sense of community within the congregation. One point of agreement that persisted over a period of many years was that the organist, Dr. Kressel, was very good but a bit overbearing. He not only played the church's pipe organ very loudly but he insisted that the congregation remain seated while he played the postlude. I was not as heavily involved in the affairs of the Kobe Union Church as Ruth and our children were but it was a source of refreshment when I did attend. We learned to know some wonderful people there.

7. Learning the Japanese Language. It was rewarding to make early progress in learning the difficult Japanese language. I will make just a few brief comments about the language. Japanese (like Spanish) uses only five vowels instead of the dozen or so that we use in spoken American English. Furthermore, the Japanese vowel system does not include any glides or diphthongs and it does not include the “i” (as in “it” or “his”) nor the “uh” (as in “up” or “luck”) sounds that we use in American English more frequently than any of the other vowels since these are the sounds that we mostly use when syllables are not stressed. It is not easy to stop using the vowels that we use most naturally in spoken English. In fact, the “uh” that many of us use as a vocalized pause (e.g. “Well, uh, let me see now, uh . . .”) is not even included in the Japanese repertoire of sounds. They use “eh” instead, as in “*Eh to, dou shimashou.*”

(Well, uh, what shall we do now?) In English, one of the key grammatical devices is word order, as in the difference between the declarative sentence “This is a book.” and the interrogative “Is this a book?” In Japanese, word order is largely irrelevant, since the function of a word in a sentence (e.g. subject or object) is indicated by one-syllable particles such as *wa* (the previous word is the subject) or *wo* (the previous word is the object). So a Japanese sentence might be the equivalent of something like “Book (*wo*) read I (*wa*).” The order of the words doesn’t matter (much). Adding a *ka* at the end of a sentence makes it a question, with no other changes in word order or intonation.

Then there is the whole complicated matter of levels of polite speech. The Spanish and German languages basically use two levels of politeness: formal and informal. Japanese uses multiple levels (some say seven) of politeness, depending on the identity of the speaker (e.g. males and females speak differently), relative status (e.g. positions in the hierarchy, so a student speaking “up” to a teacher and a teacher speaking “down” to a student use different forms of the language), and the situation (e.g. different forms of the language are used if a student is speaking with a group of teachers around than if only a group of fellow students are present). Even in America where we like to pretend that we are all equal, we still have subtle ways of being polite or casual, depending on the situation. But in the Japanese language it is virtually impossible to avoid choosing whether to speak “up” or “down” to the other person. And almost everything changes—vocabulary, grammar, rhythm, and intonation—depending on the level of politeness required by the relationship or the social context. The differences in language are so great that when Emperor Hirohito announced to the nation on the radio that Japan had lost the war, few Japanese had any idea what he said.

That is one reason business cards are so important in Japan. The cards indicate the status positions of the persons in the conversation, and until that is clear, communication is almost impossible, or very awkward, at best. Is this person my superior or inferior? What level of politeness should I use? That helps to explain why in a crowded commuter train packed like sardines with hundreds of people who stand eye-ball to eye-ball or hang onto straps from the ceiling, armpit to armpit, almost no one speaks to anyone else. There is a deathly silence throughout the whole car. Of course friends who are travelling together will converse, but strangers do not speak with one another because it is just too complicated. This also helps to explain why, on one early morning commute from rural Wakayama into urban Osaka, a very attractive young woman wearing immaculate white slacks, sat down next to me, opened her big cosmetic case, and nonchalantly applied her many layers of makeup before she exited the train to go to her job, looking even more spectacular than when she entered. I and our many other fellow passengers

were not part of her social network, so it was as if we did not even exist. The whole system of communication (and non-communication) is so incredibly complicated and subtle that even native Japanese encounter frequent misunderstandings. But it was gratifying to at least begin to understand and, much later, actually use the spoken language, though we could never get it entirely “right.” I did get close enough, though, that on several occasions the person at the other end of a telephone conversation did not know that I was a *gaijin* (foreigner) until I let it be known. I found that really gratifying!

We were also beginning to learn to use the Japanese writing system, about which I will again mention only a few things. The writing system was imported from China in the sixth century. Each symbol (*kanji*) is basically a picture that expresses a meaning, something like the icons on a computer, or the picture of a “heart” in a sentence like “I (heart) you.” Four lines forming a square shape, like a box, for example, is a picture of a mouth, or an opening, or a boundary. The pronunciation of this character can vary greatly, since each of the many dialects in China has its own way (or ways) of saying mouth. Some of these pronunciations found their way to Japan along with the written symbol, so the character might be pronounced with one of several different sounds, each going back to a dialect in China. And, of course, the Japanese already had their own way (or several ways) of saying mouth, so the character might be read using either one of the Chinese pronunciations or one of the indigenous Japanese pronunciations. There are rules that help determine which pronunciation is appropriate. It all depends on the context. One senior Norwegian missionary who was also a linguist claimed to have found 101 different pronunciations for a single character (e.g. *ikiru*, *umu*, *nama*), which might mean “life” or “birth” or, for some reason, the “draft” in draft beer (*nama biiru*).

The first 880 of these Chinese characters are learned during the first six grades of elementary school, and high school graduates in Japan are expected to have learned a total of 1850 Chinese characters, most of which can be pronounced in multiple ways. And, for reasons too complicated to explain here, the Japanese also needed to write phonetically (each symbol represents a sound, as in our English alphabet, and not as a picture of an idea, as in *kanji*), so they developed two alphabets of phonetic symbols with about 50 letters in each set. One set (*hiragana*) is used for native Japanese words and the other set (*katakana*) is used for foreign origin words such as “America” or “computer” or “Enns.” Of course it is possible to use kanji characters to write foreign words. For example, my friend, Tanaka Jun-san, once gave me a personal ink stamp (*han*) of the type that many Japanese use instead of a signature. He somewhat arbitrarily selected two Chinese characters that together could be pronounced

as *en-zu* (Enns). The first character, pronounced *en* or *yen* means “money,” and the second character, *su* (or *sawa*) is a rather poetic term for a marsh. Some people who saw this Japanese version of my name joked that it means that I am a rich man. In any case, learning the Japanese language is a nightmare even for native Japanese and much more so for foreigners who are trying to learn as adults. But here, again, it was gratifying to know that we were making progress.

8. Appreciating Japanese Culture. Language both reflects and shapes a culture and a society. Since hierarchy is very important in how social relationships are structured in Japan, the language both reflects and helps to sustain hierarchical relationships. It took me a long time to accept the fact that since I was a male, a foreigner, and a missionary, people spoke to me very formally and deferentially. Even though I was young, elderly professors and pastors would address me as *sensei*, a term of politeness and respect that means “teacher” but it also means much more than that, since medical doctors, artists, pastors, and even an elderly, successful businessman might also be addressed as *sensei*.

We also learned early on that many Japanese people feel that it is very important to re-pay persons who have done them a favor. It is virtually impossible to do a favor for a person without that person feeling a sense of obligation to reciprocate in some way. We found this out very quickly when we invited students to our home for class or some other kind of meeting. The students would almost always arrive with gifts of fruit, or a cake, or flowers for us that we knew they could not afford to buy. Our attempts to be hospitable proved to be very expensive for our guests. And there was no point in saying that gifts were not necessary. The culture made the gifts obligatory. There is even a Japanese word for this feeling of obligation to reciprocate. The word is *on*. Since the gifts relieve the sense of indebtedness that comes with receiving a favor from someone, it turns out that the kindest thing to do is to learn to graciously accept the gifts that are offered—and to be careful not to do “favors” for people that would leave them burdened with heavy loads of *on* that were too much for them to bear. American anthropologist Ruth Benedict made the case that the notion of *on* is at the heart of all of Japanese culture. It was not always easy, but we were learning what it meant to live in this new and very different culture, and in some ways the learning brought its own reward. It was not all fun, though, since the more we learned, the more we became aware that we could *never* get it all right. We would *always* be *gaijin*, outside people.

We were also learning to understand and appreciate many other features of Japanese culture. I have already indicated that we learned to enjoy cold noodles on ice, but we also learned to appreciate eating raw fish and other creatures of the sea (sometimes while still alive and moving, as in “dancing sushi”

where the live shrimp still quivered on the rice)—and many other Japanese dishes, too. I must confess, though, that even after many years in Japan I never could learn to enjoy the slimy, green, fermented soybean dish called *natto*, even though it is supposedly very healthy and is said to increase one's virility. Soaking in a hot Japanese bath (especially in an outdoor hot spring) came to be a highlight of our days. We visited beautiful old Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples and Japanese gardens, sometimes with language school classmates and sometimes with other friends. We learned to read (in English translation, mostly) Japanese novelists such as Dazai, Kawabata (who won a Nobel Prize for literature), Tanizaki (in whose house we lived for a while) and the Christian writer Endo Shusaku, about whom I will have more to say later. We visited Tachikui, a village not too far from Kobe where the farmers had been producing *Tamba* pottery for 800 years. (Many years later daughter Terri named one of her pet dogs *Tamba* because her coloring reminded Terri of the pottery in Tachikui and a pet cat was named *Bizen* because her coloring was similar to pottery from another area in Japan.) We bought or rescued from the trash pieces of old Japanese furniture, some of which we still enjoy using in our home. We learned about *haiku* poetry and the art of calligraphy (brush writing). We once experienced a tea ceremony that lasted about four hours. And we learned that a word that was important in many of the traditional Japanese art forms is *shibui*, a word that can be translated in various ways, including “low-keyed” or “subdued taste” or “understated,” or “subtle.” *Shibui* is the opposite of boisterous, or garish, or extravagant, or “in your face.” We began to understand that just as there are Japanese ways to appreciate beauty, there are also Japanese senses of humor, Japanese notions of how to express gratitude, and, certainly, Japanese concepts of “God” that were very different from our own. We were just beginning to enter another cultural world.

We were not only fascinated by many aspects of Japanese culture. In fact, perhaps in some ways we were even captivated by the culture. We were warned early on by some of our fellow missionaries that we should be careful lest we become too enamored with things Japanese. We needed to remember that we were in Japan not to master the language nor to enjoy the culture too much but to call people to repentance and Christian faith. Some knowledge of the language and culture was necessary to accomplish this, but spending too much time trying to master the language and appreciate the culture could distract us from our real mission. This attitude was part of the older one-way, top-down “salvationist” approach to mission that I mentioned earlier. Perhaps we were guilty of this, but there were many things about living in Japan that we enjoyed very much. Working hard to understand and appreciate Japanese culture was part of our vision of mission as a two-way street, or a “bridge” on

which communication and respect flowed in both directions. In fact, “bridge” served for many years as a metaphor for what we understood our lives and work in Japan were all about.

Mission anthropologist Jacob Loewen, with whom I visited at Tabor College in 1962, used a different metaphor, but it was easy for us to identify with the transition that he described in his autobiography, *Educating Tiger*. Loewen was born in Russia but he grew up and received his early education in “old world” MB communities, mostly in Canada, so his initial view of mission work was that the goal was exclusively “soul winning,” or saving individuals from eternal punishment in hell. Providing social, educational, and medical services was part of the “social gospel,” and that was for “liberals” and “modernists,” not for real Bible-believing Christians, whose primary calling was to share the “gospel” in obedience to Jesus’ “Great Commission.” But after many decades of missionary service in many places and cultures around the world (as a consultant with the American Bible Society), he came to think of the missionary role primarily as that of a “catalyst,” whose main function is to facilitate mutual understandings and cooperation across religious and cultural boundaries. Since no individual person and no single community has an exclusive claim on the whole of Christian truth, and since God is present and at work in every time and place, including tribal cultures around the world as well as in Buddhist and other religious communities, one goal of Christian mission is to serve as a “catalyst” to facilitate mutual sharing so we can all see more clearly who God is and how he/she is at work within and among all of us. “Sharing of gifts,” Tim Lind and our friend, Pakisa Tschimika, called it. So I was not at all alone in thinking of the missionary role as a bridge that facilitates two-way traffic across many kinds of boundaries and barriers. Of course Jake Loewen had his critics, just as we felt considerably out of step with many of our fellow missionaries when we entertained ideas such as these.

9. Developments in the MB world. I have already indicated that we felt a great kinship of spirit with some of the MB leaders from North America who visited us during our early years in Japan. There were also other developments that gave us courage and hope. For example, the mission leadership in North America did not send us to Japan alone. In fact, we were part of a whole contingent of new MB missionaries who did not share the version of fundamentalism and dispensationalism that had formed the early core of MB mission work in Japan. Like us, the other newcomers had graduated from non-dispensationalist schools such as the Mennonite Brethren Bible College (MBBC) in Winnipeg, Canada (Abe and Kay Koop and Pauline Peters) and the MB Seminary in Fresno (Wohlgemuths). The Zerbes had previously served with The Evangelical Alliance Mission (TEAM) and even they brought a less narrow and legalistic understanding of Christian faith. One of the new members of the MB mission

community in Japan was Pauline Peters (later Kliever), who was sent to work with us in “student evangelism.” Pauline was from Canada, had studied at MBBC, and was a registered nurse. She was very bright, full of energy, and somewhat of a free spirit. We greatly enjoyed her friendship in Japan and in Fresno where she and Henry lived for many years until he passed away in 2016. More about Pauline in my discussion of Fresno Pacific later. With the arrival of us new people, the size of the MB mission staff in Japan was doubled. But most of us did not stay very long. We each had our own circumstances, but surely one of the reasons we left was that we found it difficult to work with the “senior” missionaries who had long since adopted the theology and the strategies that they would use in their work. Few of us new missionaries were really able to fit in.

Another development in the larger MB world at that time was the merger of two major denominational programs into one. The Board of Foreign Missions was merged with the domestic Board of Christian Service, forming a new Board of Mission and Service (BOMAS). Behind this merger lay the very Anabaptist/Mennonite notion that words and deeds should not be separate. Preaching and good deeds should complement and reinforce one another. We were happy to see that the denomination was working toward a unification of verbal proclamation of the Christian message and the demonstration of that message in deeds of service to our fellow human beings. I have already mentioned that the MB seminary in Fresno was in a very deliberate transition from dispensationalism and fundamentalism to a more Anabaptist orientation.

Behind these and other developments was a larger ferment in the MB world, represented by two manuscripts: a novel by Canadian Rudy Wiebe and a long essay by our friend, Delbert Wiens. Rudy Wiebe’s novel, *Peace Shall Destroy Many* was published in 1962, the same year we arrived in Japan. His novel reflected a critical perspective on life in a traditional Mennonite frontier village in Saskatchewan, Canada. Delbert Wiens’ essay, *New Wineskins for Old Wine*, published in 1965, used new theological and social science vocabulary to call for change in MB spirituality. Since Wiebe was the editor of the Canadian MB paper and Delbert was teaching in an MB school and his essay was published as an insert in the official U.S. MB periodical, it seemed that at least some of the leaders in the North American MB conferences were no longer tied to the narrow old traditions and rigid fundamentalist forms, even though what these young intellectuals were saying created quite a furor in the churches. There seemed to be many reasons for hope.

So for a good part of the time during our three and one half years as MB missionaries in Japan we felt that we were in a difficult quandary. On the one hand, there were many things that we enjoyed about

our lives in Japan, and we had made a commitment to a six year term, but, on the other hand, we did not feel that we fit into nor were we contributing much to what the MB missionaries were trying to accomplish. We were also more generally uncomfortable with the expectations that were attached to the missionary role in Japan. For example when we were introduced as “missionaries,” the usual next question was “Where is your church?” because that is what missionaries did. They started churches. One student’s impulsive response when I was introduced as a missionary was “Oh, I am sorry.” (*sumimasen*) We were wondering what we should do, so when the mission shortened terms from six years to three, we made arrangements to return to the U.S. after three and one half years in Japan. But before we left Japan in January 1966, we talked with several people about the possibility of finding a teaching position in Japan. We returned to California with those thoughts in mind (**Photo #20**).

OSAKA SHOIN WOMEN’S COLLEGE: 1968-1970

Before we left Japan in 1966, we began to explore options for a possible return under different circumstances. There were several sources for a vision of how we might accomplish this. We were inspired by the example of Mennonite Church missionaries Marvin and Mary Alene Miller and General Conference Mennonite missionaries Ferd and Viola Ediger (and others) who were experimenting with self-supporting mission roles that put them closer to the life experiences of ordinary Japanese people and involved fewer superior-inferior relationships both inside and outside of the churches. Abe and Kay Koop, too, served as teachers in the Canadian Academy while maintaining a relationship with the MB mission. Our MB missionary friend and colleague, Pauline Peters, shared many of the same concerns and alternative visions that we had. So, we thought, perhaps we could return to Japan in a different status that minimized the sources of our discomfort while allowing us to continue our lives in Japan while contributing to the more broadly based understanding of the nature of the Christian life as it was held even by many in the MB constituencies in the US and Canada.

Behind all of this was the widespread ferment concerning the nature of Christian mission that I intimated in my comments about mission-anthropologist Dr. Jacob Loewen. Many voices in the larger international Christian community were calling for fundamental changes in the nature of the missionary enterprise, including many calls for a “moratorium” on missions. Missions, the thinking went, had been too closely tied to European colonialism and American imperialism. For too many missionaries the Christian gospel and western culture were all mixed up together. All too often the missionaries occupied a dominating position in their relationships with the “natives,” Christian and non-Christian alike, retaining their own sources of income, their own luxurious (for the context) standard of living,

and an unquestioned confidence in the superiority of both the culture and the religion they came to propagate. Many voices were advocating a switch from preaching and church planting as the essence of what Christian mission was all about to a more holistic approach that included justice for the poor and oppressed in society. Around this time books with titles like *The Unpopular Missionary* and *Missionary, Go Home!* were being published.

There were some signs that MB missions, too, were engaged in a fundamental paradigm shift. I have mentioned the merger of the MB board of missions and the board of Christian Service, and several senior missionaries had been called home from their ministries in India and Africa by mission administrators, over the objections of the missionaries and many of their supporters in North America. The old days of imperialistic missions were ending. The new vision called for “partnerships” and greater sensitivity to the indigenous cultures and religions. Words like “contextualization” and “inculturation” were coming into use, meaning that mission should be a two-way street with sharing that goes both ways. So perhaps we should not have been surprised that the MB missionaries in Japan were more than a little concerned that we (and the board) were proposing a pretty radical redefinition of what it meant to be a missionary. I remember the comment of one of the MB missionaries that he knew what God had called him to do in Japan and that was not to carry a briefcase for a Japanese pastor.

I did not have the language at the time to describe the changes in these terms, but one simple way to summarize the larger history of Christian missions is to say that the initial goal of “the white man’s burden” was to *transplant* both the Christian faith and western (presumably “Christian”) culture in other parts of the world, so converting to Christianity also meant, among many other things, to put on western clothes, go to school, learn English, and marry only one wife. The missionaries were the purveyors of this extension of “Christian civilization” to the distant, dark corners of the earth, all too often travelling with and serving under the protection of the military of the “sending” states and often in close collaboration with the corporate agencies of colonial economic exploitation. There was often more than just a little bit of racist thinking that was part of all of this.

To be fair, though, it must also be said that not all missionaries fit this pattern. There have always been many missionaries who invested enormous amounts of effort to understand, respect, and learn from the cultures and religions of the people they came to serve and many also expressed strong criticisms of the exploitative and oppressive policies of their own colonial governments. Many missionaries became early advocates for the rights of the oppressed “natives” whom they came to understand, respect, and love.

The next phase in mission strategy was to make the newly planted churches *indigenous* as rapidly as possible. As the slogan went, the “native” churches should be “self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating” (the “three selfs”). That was the mission strategy that we were part of as MB missionaries. The goal was to replicate western MB Christian theologies and churchly structures, but then, at the earliest possible date, entrust the leadership to indigenous persons. So one of the North American MB confessions of faith was simply translated into Japanese. In the case of Japan, it was the confession of faith of the U.S Pacific District Conference that was translated, not the longer COF of the larger North American General Conference of MB churches. We MB missionaries organized congregations and denominational entities such as conferences, schools, camping programs, radio ministries, denominational papers, etc. that were much like what we had known in North America and then the goal was to turn over the leadership to the “indigenous” people who would then be “self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating.” But the mission and missionaries remained organizationally separate from the “native” Christian community, retaining their own autonomy, economic support system, and life-style. That is what it meant to plant “indigenous” churches.

The next transition in mission thinking was to a more radical *contextualization*, which included the assumption that the Christian gospel would quite naturally take on very different cultural forms in different cultural contexts. Our western version of Christianity was shaped by Greek and Roman forms of rationality and organizational structures, and by the peculiarities of American religious culture, but Japanese Christians came out of a historical context shaped by Shinto pantheism and Hindu-Buddhist spirituality, so of course Japanese understandings of what Christianity is all about would be substantially different from what we know in the West. To illustrate very briefly something of what this might mean, Uchimura Kanzo, Meiji-era founder of the Mukyokai (Non-church) movement in Japan, pointed out that the faith of Christians in the west has been shaped by the lives and teachings of people like Augustine, Luther, and Wesley, but his spirituality as a Japanese Christian is built on foundations laid by Japanese Buddhist teachers such as Hounen and Shinran, so of course his faith will be somewhat different from that of the missionaries, with whom he experienced many conflicts. For Uchimura, Christianity was his “sun” but Buddhism was his “moon.”

Most of us westerners assumed that since our religion and our political structures had been united since the fourth century when Constantine made Christianity the religion of the empire, it was natural that the church was associated with the economic and political powers that be, while in the Asian context Christianity was a small minority religious community with minimal cultural or political influence.

These very different circumstances and perspectives provided an opportunity for mutual learning and enrichment. Foreigners might be part of the process, but only to the extent that they could contribute to conversations and cooperation between equals. True dialog cannot happen when one party controls all (or most) of the money, power, and presumed wisdom. I think that at the time some of us were groping our way in the direction of contextualization, without really being aware of what was happening around us and lacking the missiological language. In retrospect, the changes that happened during the decade of the 1960s were radical indeed. According to mission historian Scott Sunquist, during that single decade mission strategy shifted from “proclamation,” to “presence,” to “partnership.” Those transitions formed part of the changing environment in which we served as MB missionaries in Japan.

Many interesting (sometimes “weird”) things happen when religious (or other cultural) ideas and practices travel across cultural boundaries from one community to another. For example, when we were in Japan during the Christmas season in 2002, we were amused when we heard the music of *Grandfather’s Clock* broadcast repeatedly in public places like supermarkets and shopping malls. For some reason that we never really understood, the music of *Grandfather’s Clock* had been adopted as another one of the western carols that were appropriate to the Christmas season, along with *Jingle Bells*, *Silent Night*, and *I’m Dreaming of a White Christmas*. That was curious enough, but we were really perplexed when we visited the worship service in an MB church during the Christmas season where a group of children wearing Santa hats did a bell choir rendition of—you guessed it! *Grandfather’s Clock*. I lack the wisdom to know what a contextualized version of Christianity might look like in Japan, but I am pretty sure that is not it.

This transition toward contextualization is something that seems not to have had much impact on the Japan Mennonite Brethren Conference. In 2000 when the JMBC celebrated the 50th anniversary of the founding of their conference, they chose as part of their logo two very European-looking figures who are obviously farmers: a woman wearing a bonnet and a long skirt and holding a rake, and a man wearing a broad-brimmed hat, dressed in overalls with a pitchfork on his shoulder. This might reflect the agrarian heritage of many of us European and American Mennonites, but it is pretty remote from the realities of urban Japan at the end of the 20th century.

To return to my personal story, the correspondence that we have in our files indicates that before we left Japan during the spring, 1966 we had two sessions with the MB Mission Administrative Committee (MAC) concerning the possibility of returning to Japan in a different relationship with the mission and

the JMBC. We proposed that we would return to the U.S. where I would obtain an MA degree in anthropology or sociology and then return to Japan with a university teaching position and some form of associate status with the MB mission. One of our goals was that our life-style should more closely approximate that of our Japanese peers. The MB mission folks on “the field” indicated that they would have no objections if the MB Board of Missions and Services agreed to support such an arrangement.

At about the same time, I had a series of conversations with Professor Harada at Osaka University about the possibility of obtaining a university teaching position somewhere in the Kobe-Osaka (Kansai) area. Harada-sensei indicated that if I had some sort of MA degree (My degree from Fuller was a three-year graduate degree that is presently called Master of Divinity but at that time it was still called Bachelor of Divinity, so I had two BA degrees.), he was quite certain that he could help me find a teaching position in the area. In fact, his Osaka University was planning to hire faculty for a language laboratory and he indicated that I would have a good chance of being appointed to such a position if the timing and the circumstances were right. So we left Japan with the intention that we might return in some form of self-supporting role and with associate status with the MB mission.

After our return from Japan, we temporarily moved into the house on K Street in Reedley where I had lived during the first eight years of my childhood. Our children attended the Washington Elementary school across the street and I investigated options for a graduate program. I remember an exploratory visit to the Department of Anthropology at the University of California in Berkeley—and returned to Reedley feeling like the department did not at all fit my interests and needs and the prospects of moving our family to the San Francisco Bay area seemed to be really daunting. Perhaps this was just seeking the easiest way out, but a visit with my old sociology professors at the University of California, Santa Barbara and our former haunts in that area seemed so inviting that I applied for and was accepted into the graduate program in sociology at UCSB beginning in the fall of 1966.

We moved into a comfortable duplex apartment (with patio) at 6666 Pasado in Isla Vista, the student community just a few blocks from the beach and the UCSB campus. Ruth applied for and was hired as a teacher in the brand new Mountain View elementary school in the Goleta Valley School District where her principal was Eddie Zuzalik, the same man for whom I had worked as a janitor and gardener during our undergraduate years in Santa Barbara. Our children became students in the Isla Vista elementary school near our home. After some disappointing visits to some of the churches in which we had been involved during our previous years in the area (including the Grace Church where CCCMB pastor Werner Kroeker later served), we settled into the Goleta Valley Baptist Church

(American Baptist). We chose that church in part because just a few days after our first visit, Pastor Howard Bess arrived at our duplex in Isla Vista to let us know what kind of church it was. He knew that we were Mennonites, so he wanted us to understand very clearly that the members of the church smoked, danced, and drank alcohol, “vices” with which he thought we might have problems. We assured Howard that none of these things would present problems for us. In fact, we were looking for a church experience in which we would be on the conservative end of the continuum rather than always being considered to be the liberals in the group as we had been with MB missionaries in Japan. We enjoyed entering into the life of the congregation, where we sang in the choir, taught Christian Education classes, etc.

One incident that happened during our nearly two years in Isla Vista that seemed very bizarre at the time might merit recounting. The couple and young daughter who resided in the part of the duplex from which we were separated by carports lived a life-style that might fit into the new world that has emerged more clearly in recent decades but it was certainly very remote from what we had known in Reedley and as missionaries in Japan. The husband was on the staff at UCSB and the wife was a stay-at-home mom. She told us one evening that her husband did not satisfy her sexually, so she often randomly invited anonymous young men from the beach just below where we lived to visit her in her home. No one had ever refused her invitation, she told us. In fact, she was frustrated because too many of the young men assumed that one invitation meant that they could come back later for more—something that she did not intend at all.

Our neighbors’ approach to childrearing was unusual to say the least. We often heard sounds of slapping or beating and cries of distress from their daughter, who was about five years old at the time. They wanted to teach her to be “independent” so they would drop her off at various locations in Isla Vista and expect her to find her way home alone (though, to their credit, they watched from a distance to make sure that she was OK). One cold, foggy morning they forced her to stand outside as punishment because the night before she had climbed up onto a kitchen counter and drank some alcohol that she had reached down from the cupboard. They were upset when UCSB required girls to wear swimming caps for swimming lessons in the campus pool while the boys were not faced with this requirement, so our neighbors simply cut their daughter’s hair and sent her for swimming lessons, in trunks, as a boy named “Peter.”

Needless to say, we were concerned about their treatment of their daughter, so one evening we invited them for a conversation. “For God’s sake, leave us alone!” was part of their response. “People like

you have harassed us wherever we have gone, so by now we know how to avoid any evidence of child abuse if you call the authorities.” Using a ping-pong paddle to punish their child inflicted a lot of pain, they said, but the red marks faded quickly, so no one would ever know what happened. “We used to be like you,” they said, “but we have rejected that life-style and we are developing our own. So please just leave us alone.”

We were not sure what to do, so one weekend when we were in Reedley we talked with Ruth’s sister Judy, who worked as a nurse in a medical doctor’s office. We described the situation to Judy, thinking that she might be familiar with laws related to child abuse, and particularly, when an observer is legally obligated to report the situation to the authorities. The next day Judy called to ask for the names of our neighbors, because when Judy talked with the MD who was her employer he thought the situation sounded very familiar. It turned out that the wife next door to us in Isla Vista was the Reedley MD’s niece! The niece had cut off all contact with the family so no one knew where she was. The MD wanted to come down immediately to intervene in the situation.

We begged for a bit of patience because we thought we were developing a more positive relationship with our neighbors and we thought perhaps we could have some influence for the good with just a little more time. For example, one evening the distraught wife showed up at our door to ask for help in recovering from an overdose of sleeping pills. She had researched methods of committing suicide and had taken the appropriate quantity of pills for her gender, age and body size, but she had ingested the pills over too long a period of time rather than all at once so the effect was that she was feeling very miserable but she was not going to die. “You are a minister,” she said, “so you have to help me.” I finally received her permission to call a nurse friend to report anonymously what had happened and to ask what could be done to bring the poor young woman some relief. Nicotine might help, our nurse friend suggested. It just happened that a few days before I had picked up a small package of cigars that someone had dropped on the street in Isla Vista, so MB missionary Bob Enns shared his cigars with our suicidal neighbor woman. She recovered rather quickly.

We should have known that we were in way over our heads, but it all became moot when another neighbor woman felt duplicitous because she knew about the connection with the doctor’s family, so neighbor Rocky told the wife about all of the connections and concerns. Within a very short period of time the wife and daughter disappeared, leaving the husband behind. He was still on the staff at UCSB the last we heard. And also the last information we had was that the extended family no longer knew the whereabouts of their disappeared niece.

For the most part I enjoyed my graduate courses in sociology at UCSB. I was very fortunate that Dr. Thomas O'Dea arrived at UCSB for the 1967 spring semester. Dr. O'Dea was a well-known authority in the field of sociology of religion who had left Columbia University for a dual appointment at UCSB in the Department of Sociology and a newly established Institute for the Study of Religion. He was new on the campus and I was one of the few sociology graduate students at UCSB who had an interest in sociology of religion, so I became a kind of disciple of Dr. O'Dea. I was his teaching assistant in his undergraduate course in Sociology of Religion. I quickly learned that he was one of the brightest and most charming persons whom I have ever known. In re-reading some of his work recently, I realized that I had not really been aware during my time as a student just how profound his work was. I also learned early on that he had left his Roman Catholic wife and son on the East Coast and soon married Janet Aviad, a Jewish graduate student of his at Columbia who had divorced her Rabbi husband in order to move to California to marry Roman Catholic Professor O'Dea. Before introducing his fiancé to me, he went out of his way to warn me that I should not be too surprised, because "She is kind of young." We attended their wedding, and they were later our guests in Fresno with new-born son, Michael. Some 30 years later I happened to notice an article in *Time* magazine that featured Michael as a reluctant Israeli soldier and mentioned that his mother, Janet, was an Israeli "peace activist." Small world, again.

I passed the required MA "Qualifying Examination" during the spring semester, 1967. The essay question on the examination was about the sociological concept of "alienation" and I had just finished writing a paper on this topic, so I felt very fortunate indeed when I read the question on the exam. I decided to write an MA thesis (Five year old Karen said I was writing my "feces.") on *Tenrikyo*, one of the so-called "New Religions" in Japan. I used the sociological concepts of "church" and "sect" to describe and analyze this interesting religion, which provided me with the opportunity to point out similarities and differences between Japanese *Tenrikyo* and Anabaptist/Mennonites in Europe and America. I finished the program and the thesis in December 1967, shortly before our return to Japan in March 1968.

Of course there was nothing at all automatic about our return to Japan. Like any complicated puzzle, all of the pieces needed to fit together. We needed a job offer (two job offers, actually). We hoped for the support of the MB mission administration. We expected that the missionaries in Japan would concur. We would need visas from the Japanese government. And we promised our children that they would have veto power over what we were proposing to do.

I will begin with our children. I reported in a letter to a friend that we suffered through many teary bedtimes as we discussed with our kids the idea of returning to Japan. The big issue seemed to be that they did not want to attend Japanese schools. Our original intention was that our children would attend Japanese schools because this would be in keeping with our notion that we should live closer to the life styles of our Japanese friends and because the schools for foreigners in Japan were very expensive. But our kids had each had difficult experiences during their years in Japanese pre-schools and kindergartens and they were strongly resistant to the idea of going back into the Japanese educational system—which they had already left once. Their resistance to the idea of returning to Japan seemed to evaporate when we promised them that they would not have to attend Japanese schools. Of course this decision also meant that we would need the equivalent of two incomes since tuition for three students at the Canadian Academy approximated one teaching salary.

So we needed not one job offer but two. I have already mentioned that Professor Harada had raised the possibility of a full time teaching position for me at Osaka University, but the timing was not right to suit their circumstances and they really needed an expert in teaching English as a second language to help with their new language laboratory program. But Professor Harada was able to negotiate for me a part-time teaching position at Osaka University, plus he sent word that he had contacted a former colleague of his who had become the president of Osaka Shoin Women's College in East Osaka. Shoin president Ushioda was prepared to offer three-year full time contracts for me to teach English in the College and Ruth in the attached high school for girls. The Shoin positions were to begin in March 1968 and the *Handai* position in April, the normal beginning of the fiscal year for most institutions and organizations in Japan, including most schools and churches. We responded to the Shoin job offers by saying that our return to Japan with our family was an experiment and that we were hesitant to commit ourselves to three year contracts. We were especially uncertain about what might happen in our family if Ruth was working full time. Shoin graciously agreed that our contracts would be for the first year only, renewable if circumstances permitted. So the work and income parts of the puzzle (two full time and one part time position), plus the concurrence of our children seemed to be in place.

Negotiations with the mission and the missionary pieces of the puzzle proved to be more difficult. As I mentioned earlier, the MB missionaries had indicated prior to our departure from Japan in 1966 that they would have no objections if we negotiated a self-supporting role in Japan with some assistance from the mission administration in North America. With this understanding, we initiated conversations with the MB mission administration. The administration, of course, asked for an opinion from the

missionaries “on the field.” Their response came as a great surprise to us. First, the missionaries were requesting that two or three couples be sent to Japan to work full time as student evangelists. The missionaries wanted these couples to come to Japan with previous training and experience as Campus Crusade for Christ (CCC) staff workers in North America since the missionaries felt that the Campus Crusade approach to student work was most compatible with what the MB missionaries in Japan were attempting to accomplish. These couples should come to Japan as CCC staff workers with their salaries paid by BOMAS. These stipulations applied to us, also, meaning that the missionaries were opposed to our proposal that we serve as self-supporting workers with full time teaching positions, and they requested that if we came as full time student workers, we, too, should first receive one year of training with Campus Crusade before our return to Japan. Furthermore, the missionaries reported to the mission administration in North America that if we returned to Japan under the arrangements we had proposed, we should not be permitted to work in the area where the missionaries were planting MB churches.

Needless to say, we were shocked and more than a little chagrined by this response. First, it was a reversal of what we thought we had agreed to with the missionaries two years earlier. Second, the missionaries were proposing a new approach to student work without consultations with Pauline Peters and us, even though we had substantial familiarity and experience with student work in Japan. Third, the request from the missionaries excluded the possibility that single workers might have a role in the work of the mission in Japan. The mission administration in North America was also upset because, unlike MB mission workers in many other countries, and in spite of the contributions in Japan of “single sisters” Ruth Wiens, Rubena Gunther, and Pauline Peters, the MB missionaries in Japan sought to exclude any more single sister workers from joining their ranks. There was apparently no room at all for any deviation from a very narrow definition of what missionary work was all about.

There were other issues, too. There is a curious letter that I wrote to J. B. Toews, who, by then, was the president of the MB seminary and was no longer directly involved in mission administration. The letter apparently (Neither Ruth nor I remember any of this.) followed long conversations in Fresno with J. B., Waldo Hiebert, who was then Chair of BOMAS, and H. H. Dick, then pastor of my home church in Reedley and a leader in the MB conference. The letter was in response to a report from the missionaries in Japan that there had been “indiscretions” in my relationships with fellow missionary Pauline Peters and that these indiscretions had caused considerable “anxiety” for Ruth. My letter to J. B. reported that Ruth and I had tried very hard to recall anything that we might have done or said that might have occasioned these reports. We could think of nothing. From time to time Pauline and I had

travelled together to meetings by train and, infrequently, by car, but we had never once imagined that this fell into the category of indiscretions. Ruth could find nothing in her memory that indicated anxiety on her part concerning relationships between Pauline and me.

Many long and difficult negotiations with the MB mission administration in North America and some exchanges of communication with the MB missionary leadership in Japan took place during the summer months of 1967. For the most part, we found the administrators and mission board members with whom we communicated much more receptive to our proposals than we had experienced in our relationships with the MB missionaries in Japan. This reinforced what we had come to believe on the basis of our conversations with the MB leaders from North America who had visited us in Japan and many of the contacts and experiences we had with fellow MBs since our return to California. It was the missionaries in Japan who were more out of step with the leadership of the larger MB church than we were.

I do not wish to imply in any of this that the MB missionaries held personal ill-will or animosity toward us. Roland Wiens commented in a letter that he did not agree with some of our ideas and methods, but that his main concern was that we should be spared the frustration and disappointment that result from an unclear assignment. Ben Zerbe wrote that he thought that the situation called for good administration, not personal reconciliation. It is not a good idea, he wrote about our proposed experiment, to send out a train before the tracks are laid down.

Reaching agreements all around was complicated by several factors. One was the timing of our negotiations with schools in Japan. We needed to finalize matters during the summer or early fall of 1967 if we were to obtain visas and move to Japan to begin our work on April 1, 1968, the beginning of the academic year in Japan. And this was just at the time when the MB General Conference was in the process of merging two of their large programs into one: the domestic Christian service program and the foreign mission program. As I mentioned, the MB Board of Foreign Missions was becoming the Board of Missions and Services (BOMAS). So the mission administration was working with new board members who were still learning to work together and who were in the process of deciding how the newly merged programs would operate. In spite of these complications, the mission administrators proved to be supportive of what we were proposing. At one point the administration asked the missionaries in Japan for their response to our proposal but they each wrote personal letters to the home office instead of formulating a collective response. The mission office also asked for input from the Japan MB Conference, but, as far as I know, the JMBC never responded, which is what might have

been expected since they were being asked to address an issue which was not their responsibility. The mission finally agreed to pay our travel expenses (including shipped baggage) and they provided as a “loan” the approximately \$2000 deposit that we needed to rent our home. As was common practice at the time, the landlord kept the 10% of the deposit and we returned the remaining 90% to the mission when we left Japan in 1970. The board also requested that I attend the Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary in Fresno during the spring semester, 1968. We moved back to Reedley again shortly after I completed my MA in December 1967 but I was only able to spend part of the semester at the seminary since we flew to Japan in March 1968.

The Harry Friesen family graciously allowed us to stay with them for a few days in the large house near CA where we had lived with the Koops when we first arrived in Japan in 1962. Our first challenges were to find housing and to settle matters related to our children’s schooling. With our children we visited St. Michaels, a coed school operated by the Anglican Church, and Stella Maris, a Roman Catholic school for girls, both located in Kobe, but our children had no interest in either of those options. The fact that both schools required that their students wear uniforms was undoubtedly a major factor. So we registered them as students in the Canadian Academy. Terri was in grade four, Connie in grade three, and Karen was a first grader.

Tanaka Jun-san, a member of the Ishibashi church whom I had first met when I visited Japan from Korea in 1956 was living in Kobe at that time and this long-time friend was extremely helpful in our search for a residence. Tanaka-san introduced us to a realtor who showed us a small but almost new house that was located just up the hill from the Okamoto Station on the Hankyu Line that ran between Osaka and Kobe and was also near the Motoyama Station on the Japan National Rail line (JR). The location was very convenient because our kids used the Hankyu line to travel the 10 minute train ride to the Rokko station below their school and Ruth and I used the JR line to commute to and from our work in Shoin, about one hour and fifteen minutes each way. The house was one of six located along a walkway (no vehicle traffic) overlooking a bamboo grove. From our small balcony we could look out over the bamboo to see the Osaka Bay.

It was a lovely spot—but the house was very small by American standards, with a total of only about 620 square feet on two floors. The downstairs consisted of a Western style “living room” that was about 12’ by 12’; a Japanese style four and one half mat *tatami* room that was about 8.5’ by 8.5’ (where we kept our dining table and six chairs and where Ruth and I slept on the *tatami* mat floor on a two-thirds sized *futon*; a long, narrow kitchen; and we joked that we had three bathrooms downstairs: a

(“squat”) stool (Japanese style) in a cubicle about 5’ by 4’; a Japanese style wooden bath (just large enough for me to sit in a kind of fetal position with my knees above the water line) in a room that was about 6’ by 4’. In between these two small rooms was a small space that included a small sink. Upstairs there were two *tatami* mat rooms separated by sliding paper doors on wooden frames (*fusuma*). Each six mat room was about 9’ by 12’ where our three children slept, played, studied, etc. The fact that our three *tatami* rooms served multiple functions made the limited space somewhat more tolerable. We folded our upstairs and downstairs *futon* sleeping mats and stashed them away in our *oshiire* cupboards each morning so the rooms could be used for other purposes during the day.

Our front garden area included a small patch of lawn that Ruth cut with scissors and in back there was a four foot space between our house and a retaining wall. We kept our washer and dryer out in this outside space. We could walk along one side of the house but the neighbors walked around their house on the other side. Our dining room window was about three feet from our neighbor’s bathroom window. We lived in this small and crowded but convenient and in many ways charming home for two and one half years. Both sets of grandparents visited us in 1970, as did many other folks who were in transit from here to there in Japan and other places in Asia. For a time a stray, pregnant, mongrel puppy named “Ginger” also lived with us. We had no choice but to adopt her. Ginger is a translation of the Japanese word, *shoga*, and it is also used in *shoga (nai)* which was Osaka dialect for *shikata ga nai*, meaning something like “It can’t be helped.” This is an inside joke. We named one of Ginger’s three puppies “Sam,” short for “Samurai” (warrior) (**Photo #23**).

Larger and longer-term challenges awaited us in our teaching positions at Osaka Shoin Women’s College (**Photo #21**). The school was founded in 1917 by the Mori family as a private, non-religious high school for girls. Various Christian mission organizations had pioneered in building educational institutions for women in Japan since the 1870s but Osaka Shoin was one of the early secular private schools for women. The wealth of the founding Mori family came from large holdings of timber land in the mountains of Nara Prefecture and then from rail and sea shipping companies. The wife of the founder had studied in France and was reportedly a very progressive woman for her generation. During the time that I was on the faculty at Shoin, the chairman of the board (*rijicho*) was the young grandson of the founders. He was the person who made the important decisions for the institution (including the decision to hire us). President Ushioda was more of a ceremonial figure who lent academic *gravitas* to the school but was not the main administrative decision-maker. As far as we could tell, faculty and others associated with the College (including us) had great respect for both the president and the

chairman of the board. They both seemed to be persons of high personal integrity and were forward-looking in the decisions that they made—including their decision to hire foreigners (us) as full time members of their faculty, something that was highly unusual at the time. Chairman Mori paid us a visit on the FPC campus several years after our move to Fresno.

A post-high school program for women (*Joshi Senmon Gakko*) was begun at Shoin in 1928 and the school became a “college” (*Daigaku*) in 1948, one year after the beginning of a program in British and American Literature. In a system of education in which schools are clearly ranked according to performances on entrance examinations, Osaka Shoin Women’s College was moderately selective in the quality of students who were admitted. This means that most really bright students entered other higher ranking schools, but it also means that the really weak students were not admitted to Shoin. Because the school had a long history and tradition, there were some quite good students, some of whom attended because their mothers had graduated from Shoin. But because the school was an “escalator” institution, meaning that graduates from the high school were automatically eligible for advancement to the college, there were also some students who were quite weak academically. We quickly learned that the school had a reputation as a *beppin gakkou*, meaning that it was a school for really cute girls (My old dictionary translates *beppin* as “peach.”) and as a school for *hako-iri musume* (which translates something like “girls kept in a box.”). An informal motto was *ryo-sai, ken-bo*, or “good wives, wise mothers.” Perhaps that is what many parents had in mind in sending their daughters to Shoin but many of my students did not like to hear that at all.

During my time at Shoin, the English department had about 50 students majoring in English in each of the four years. My assignment was to teach “English conversation” to these English majors. This was a very challenging task because students were generally grouped by year in school, freshmen through seniors, so there were usually about 50 students in each of my classes. Many of these students had no interest at all in learning English. It just happened to be the major that they had selected (or had been selected for them), and it was unlikely that their major would have anything to do with their post-graduation lives as employees (temporary, usually) or wives and mothers. Each student was enrolled in 15 or 16 different courses at a time, each of which met once each week. Class periods were 90 minutes long.

I did not understand this at first, but I eventually learned that no one really expected college students in Japan to study very hard. Neither did anyone really expect professors to worry very much about whether their students were actually learning or not. Some of the science and engineering programs

are different from these generalizations, but my introduction to this relaxed attitude toward higher education happened on my very first day at Shoin. When the bell rang indicating that it was time for class to begin, I excused myself from the group of faculty with whom I was drinking tea in the faculty room. “Oh, Professor Enns,” I was told. “Please sit down and have another cup of tea. We Japanese professors do not go to class at the beginning of the class period. The students do not attend class so early, either. Please sit down and wait for a while.” Nevertheless, I went to my classroom to check and found that my colleagues were correct. Very few students were present, and those who were there seemed to be very surprised to see me in the classroom so early. So I went back to the faculty room and drank some more tea.

Over a period of years I came to understand that this relaxed attitude toward academics in higher education actually made good sense in the Japanese context. Students worked incredibly hard to prepare for entrance examinations at each level, beginning as early as preschool and continuing through college entrance exams (“examination hell” it was called) since their futures were largely determined by the quality of the college to which they were able to gain admission, and their chances for admission to a high ranking college depended on their gaining admission to a “good” high school, which depended on getting into a “good” junior high school, and on down to kindergarten and pre-school, some of which had their own entrance examinations. And then after graduation from college, the stress began all over again as they competed to enter the best possible company, where they would likely work for life, and then to perform at the highest possible level in that company. The college years represented a temporary respite from the relentless pressures of life in Japan. So there was a kind of tacit understanding that the pressures would be relaxed during the college years. Students who entered a college were almost guaranteed that they would graduate with their classmates unless they egregiously violated the formal and informal expectations. It might be helpful, some observers suggested, to think of Japanese colleges as more analogous to “resorts” than academically rigorous institutions of higher learning.

I eventually learned some other lessons about higher education in Japan in those days. “Club” and “Circle” activities were very important. Schools provided campus meeting spaces and faculty “advisors” for student clubs and circles, but the organizations were, for the most part, run by the students themselves. Seniors were in charge and freshmen did the “grunt” work, thereby providing each member, over the course of the four college years, with experiences at each level of a very hierarchical social system. Some clubs and circles in some colleges were famous for the hazing and

abuse to which freshmen were subjected, but I did not see any of this at Shoin (as I did at some other schools). The system produced some very high levels of performance, such as the male Glee Club at Kwansei Gakuin University whose concerts we sometimes attended in one of the large concert halls in Osaka. They were excellent, even without much faculty assistance. Our contact with clubs and circles at Shoin was mostly with the English Speaking Society (ESS). I helped the students with their speeches and news articles and debates and our family attended a couple of summer camps organized by the ESS students. Most of our closest relationships with students at Shoin were with members of the ESS group (**Photo #22**). I was also the advisor for the KGK (IVCF) group on the Shoin campus, but there were only a few members and they were not really very interested in meeting. We did have some Bible study meetings on campus for a while, but the students did not care for the KGK staff person and they mainly spent their time exchanging complaints about their own local congregations.

My qualifications for teaching English as a second language were meager, but I had done a bit of reading, talked with some people, studied Japanese very hard myself—and my main qualification was that I was a native speaker. I had developed some convictions based mostly on my own experiences as a Japanese language learner. It is highly unlikely that I would be hired today for the positions that I occupied then, but, as I said, in Japanese colleges some other things were more important than individual academic achievements in the classroom. Since I thought the class periods were too long (90 minutes) and class sizes too large (50 students) for effective language learning to happen, I devised a creative plan that I thought would improve the situation. I proposed that I would divide the class into two groups with about 25 students in each group, and I would divide the class period into two 45 minute mini-periods. I would meet with one group of about 25 students for about 45 minutes in one room while the other group used a tape recorder to do drills and practices in another classroom, since there was no language lab at the time. Then I would switch to the second group in the second room for 45 minutes while the first group did taped drills in their room. And since ability levels varied greatly (e.g. In one class I had a student who was already fluent in English because she had lived and attended high school in California and another student who was almost completely deaf, so she could do no English conversation at all.), I proposed that I would place the better students in one group and the weaker students in the other group.

When I tested this idea with my professor colleagues, they strongly advised me not to do this because it would be very hard on the “weak psyches” of some of the female students who would feel very badly if they were publicly identified as poor performers. A variation on my original plan seemed to be more

acceptable. Instead of assigning students on the basis of ability, I would allow them to simply group themselves with their friends. Of course the outcome turned out to be pretty much the same. Students who were serious about learning English gravitated into one group and the others into the other group. This system seemed to work reasonably well for a while, but in the longer term it proved to be too complicated and too much work for me—and, besides, there always seemed to be a shortage of classrooms, but I think the main issue was that my approach was far too rational and too “American” to fit the Japanese college situation.

Relationships with fellow faculty at Shoin were varied. The chairman of the English department was many years older than I. He could write very proper English and he was an authority on Thomas Hardy, but he had only a minimal ability to speak or understand spoken English. My spoken Japanese was better than his conversational English, but it felt very awkward for me as a young foreigner to communicate with the chair of the English Department in Japanese. So we mostly avoided speaking to one another. During my second year at Shoin Professor Shinoda arrived after many years in the U.S. I had heard that he was joining the faculty but we had not met until one day we happened to sit across the table from one another in the faculty lunchroom. I was slurping away on my bowl of noodles, Japanese style, as he opened his American lunch box and ate his white bread sandwiches. He always addressed me as “Bob” but I always spoke to him with a respectful “Shinoda-sensei.” Years later when he visited us in Fresno he asked Ruth to do some laundry for him. We discovered then that he wore U.S. brand underwear. My underwear was still almost entirely Japanese-made. He was as Americanized as I had become Japanized. We received word in December 2015 that Shinoda-sensei had just passed away.

Takemoto-sensei was the Shoin faculty member with whom I developed the closest relationship, partly because he was only five years older than I and we shared an office. We worked together to very slowly and meticulously translate into English several Japanese short stories that were published in the Shoin Journal and elsewhere. For our translation work, we usually met in his study in a separate building in the garden of his home near Nishinomiya. I really feel that this was the most effective form of Japanese language learning that I ever experienced. We spent many hours discussing the nuances of English and Japanese words and phrases, and the cultures behind them, as we attempted to do our translation work. There were several reasons that I invested large amounts of time in the work that I did with Takemoto-sensei. First, it was like a very intense tutorial in the Japanese language and culture—at no financial cost to me. Second, since I wanted to be a “real” Japanese professor, it was

important that I publish something from time to time. This seemed like a simple way to add publications to my resume. And, finally, we translated the works of thoughtful commentators (Dazai Osamu and Endo Shusaku) on Japanese life and culture, so I was learning a lot!

Over time, Takemoto-sensei and I became good friends. He would sometimes invite me to join him in his favorite sushi restaurant under the elevated train tracks in downtown Kobe. The restaurant had room for only eight stools along the counter behind which the owner (“Mr. Baseball,” he was called, because he always wore a baseball cap and listened to Japanese major league baseball on a radio in his restaurant) and his wife worked. Takemoto-sensei was the type of Japanese man who turns bright red after drinking even the smallest quantity of alcohol. I learned a lot from him in the sushi shop!

Takemoto-sensei “retired” from Shoin a few years after we returned to California in 1970. His explanation was that he was tired of the petty bickering and politics that are involved in most academic departments in Japanese colleges and universities, so he preferred to teach part time in several different colleges rather than being bogged down with committees and campus politics in just one. That seemed to make sense to me. However, there were rumors that the real reason he left Shoin had to do with the sale of questions on the entrance examinations—and there were other even more salacious rumors. I did not try to find out whether these rumors were simply confirmation of what Takemoto-sensei had said about the gossiping and back-biting that typically happens in Japanese colleges or if there was more to it than that. I could not see any good reason to even ask.

I have already intimated that the students at Shoin were a mixed lot. Many were focused on their own personal affairs and were simply going through the motions of college life in Japan—club activities, part-time jobs, vacation travel, clothes, boyfriends, and maybe a bit of studying now and then. Over the years it seemed to me that about one hour of studying outside of class per week (total) was about the average for most of the many university students with whom I had conversations about their study habits. “Homework” was just not part of the expectations. During their senior year male students, especially, needed to get serious about finding jobs after graduation and I discovered that it was normal procedure for senior students to simply disappear from class for weeks at a time because they were busy with job applications and interviews. Some Shoin students were serious about a career, but most knew that what most probably awaited them was a period of a few years of generally menial work in an office or shop (as an “Office Lady,” or “O.L.”) and then marriage and motherhood, followed, perhaps, by some sort of part-time job after the kids were grown. For English majors, that might mean tutoring younger students in English.

But, of course, not all of the young women at Shoin were content to fit into this stereotypical pattern. Some of my students were very interesting people. I will mention just a few. One bright and attractive young woman disappeared from class for several weeks. When she returned, she came to my office to apologize and to explain that she had just learned that when her older sister's fiancé's family had investigated her family background in preparation for the marriage, as was common practice, the other family had accused her family of belonging to an "outcast" group euphemistically known as the *burakumin* (village people), or by the more derogatory term *eta*. (Neither of the two Japanese-English dictionaries that I usually used includes this taboo word.) My student was devastated because she had never even heard that there was such a group, hidden in the shadows of respectable Japanese society—much less that she would be accused of being one! Another student who had successfully "passed" as a real Japanese all the way into her college years decided to "come out" and reveal that her family was actually Korean, another stigmatized group in Japan. Another student told me that she was having an affair with a married man in another city. They eventually married and everything seemed to turn out OK. One especially charming young woman married a calligraphy professor, who was a rather well known artist. Another very bright and energetic young woman became a sort of Japanese version of Julia Childs who appeared, from time to time, on Japanese T.V. as a chef who specialized in new versions of traditional Japanese cooking. She and her husband later owned and operated a Japanese restaurant in New York City.

Some Shoin graduates followed us to Fresno to continue their studies at Pacific College. The first young woman to do so came to the U.S. in the early 1970s because, unbeknownst to us, she already had an American boyfriend on the east coast. He moved to Fresno and when they announced their intentions to marry during the summer, her father arrived from Japan to declare to her, in our presence in our living room, that if she married before returning to Japan for a visit, she would no longer be a part of their family. When the daughter tearfully persisted in their marriage plans, the father relented and we enjoyed a most interesting Jewish-Japanese (and Mennonite) wedding in a judge's home and a reception in a hotel in Fresno. The Japanese father of the bride and the east-coast Jewish mother of the groom joined in the celebration. The couple returned to Japan, lost a still-born child, divorced (over the strenuous objections of her parents), and my student remarried another American. She earned MA and Ph.D. degrees and worked for many years as a Japanese language instructor in two American universities, retiring when her elderly parents joined her and her family in their home in Pennsylvania. In September 2012 she phoned late one night to let us know that her father, with whom we had

maintained contact, had passed away. In January 2016 we enjoyed a reunion with this former student from long ago (She was a 67 year old woman by then), here in Fresno. We enjoyed reminiscing together about our long history of shared experiences and mutual acquaintances. Another former Shoin student who came to Fresno became engaged to a young American, who had second thoughts about the marriage and felt obliged to travel to Japan to try to apologize and explain to the young woman and her family. Needless to say, that did not go very well. But my student later married another American who was employed in Japan and things seemed to work out OK as far as we know. Experiences such as this with a great variety of Japanese people were always complicated and sometimes painful, but they certainly enriched our lives!

But I was not only teaching at Shoin. I also had a part-time teaching job at Osaka University (*Handai*). Shoin was a small, private, moderately selective school for women. *Handai* was a large, highly selective national university with a mostly male student body. But some things they shared in common. For many of the students in both schools, I was the first foreigner with whom they had experienced direct personal contact, so there was often a mixture of curiosity, awe and dread in their attitude toward me. At Shoin, this mainly meant shyness and reticence. I clearly remember one day there was a gentle knock on the door to my office. When I said “Come in,” the door opened just a crack and four heads, one above the other, peeked in at me.

One of my most bizarre teaching situations happened at Osaka University. Most of the classes that I taught were tied somehow into the curriculum so class sizes were somewhat reasonable and the students felt some obligation to take the course at least a little bit seriously. But the *Handai* administration was eager to provide as many students as possible with the opportunity to have contact with the “foreigner” (*gaijin*), so they listed an English conversation course that was open to any student from any department and could be dropped at any time without penalty. When I walked to my classroom for the first session of the course, I was surprised to find that there was a crowd of students standing in the hallway, wanting to enter the already packed classroom. So I returned to the faculty room to ask what I should do next. Professor Harada quickly made arrangements for the class to move to a large auditorium. There were about 275 students present for that first session of my “English Conversation” course. I was convinced that two things that I could do for students was to teach them, first, to hear distinctions in English sounds that are not present in Japanese, such as the difference between “rice” and “lice,” “very” and “berry,” and “bat” and “but,” so I used a textbook that provided listening exercises. A second thing that I could do was to give them substitution exercises in which they did drills such as changing tenses

according to cues such as “I go to school.” “Yesterday I went to school.” “Tomorrow I will go to school.” This emphasis on the actual use of the spoken English language (American version) was new at that time since most English instruction focused on memorizing vocabulary and rules of grammar. There was not much difference between learning a new language and learning mathematical formulas. So I was prepared to do things like that whether the group was small or large—but 275 students was a bit too much! About one half of the 275 students returned for the second session and the number decreased by about one half over a period of several weeks until I had a nice class of about 15 students who really wanted to learn. The many others had had their first contact, such as it was, with a real live *gaijin*.

Of course we were not in Japan merely to help students improve their English and their educations, though that might have been a good enough reason. We hoped to also connect some of the students with the Christian faith and church community. As I have indicated, many college students in those days were quite pessimistic about life in Japan. They were not sure where to look to find meaning for their existence. Some were attracted to radical student movements such as the *Zengakuren* student organizations that barricaded and occupied the *Handai* campus (and many others) for one full year until the police finally moved in and broke things up. I happened to be on the second floor of one of the campus buildings when busloads of riot police moved onto the campus, stormed out of their buses and used their shields and clubs to send the students flying. It was quite a scene! But many other students had a vague curiosity about Christianity—some because they wanted to better understand the literature and cultures of the West and others for more personal reasons. So it was not difficult to gather a small group for some sort of “English Bible Study.” I did not feel comfortable doing this on the campus at Shoin (except with the three to five students who belonged to the officially recognized KGK club), so the interested students and I walked the 20 minutes or so to the Nagase MB church where we could meet in peace and quiet. I was already familiar with the pastor and the situation in the Nagase church, since I had been teaching English and Bible classes there since shortly after our arrival in Japan in 1962. In Ishibashi, too, we had long been connected with the MB church and felt that we had good relationships with Arita-sensei and others in the congregation, so we had many classes at the church over a period of many years. I also led a class that met on the *Handai* campus that was organized by Kunii-san, an MB student in the law department. The class included Kunii-san and some of his friends and an instructor or two also joined the class.

One of our interesting and rewarding side activities was meeting regularly over a period of several months with Dr. Tetsuo and wife Michiko Kashiwagi to help them prepare for his specialized medical studies at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri. We first learned to know the Kashiwagis when they were Osaka University students in some of our classes in the Ishibashi church. Okada Michiko-san was the daughter of the president of Osaka University. She was majoring in psychology at *Handai* and she was already a member of the Ishibashi Church during her student years. Her friend, Kashiwagi Tetsuo-san, was an “inquirer” who attended various classes and other church activities over the course of four years before he was finally ready to receive baptism. They were eventually married and we met with them over a period of months to help them with their English in preparation for his studies in the medical school of the George Washington University medical school. After their return from the U.S., Dr. Kashiwagi became a member of the medical staff at the Yodogawa Christian Hospital near Osaka where he served as a psychiatrist and was the founder of their innovative hospice program—one of the first in Japan. He provided leadership in the hospice movement not only in Japan but throughout Asia. He later served as a professor in the medical school at Osaka University, his alma mater, and then as president of the Kinjou University in Nagoya. Through most of this, Dr. Kashiwagi managed to keep his resolution to author one book each year—along with a popular series of articles that appeared in a major national newspaper, and he taught part time in a Lutheran seminary in Kobe. Michiko-sensei taught educational psychology at Osaka Christian College where she later served as President, so there were *two* college presidents in the Kashiwagi household! The Kashiwagis also remained active in the Ishibashi MB Church, managed to raise three fine children, and through most of their married lives provided a residence and support for his widowed mother, who lived to be about 100 years of age. Our lives were greatly enriched by our friendships with wonderful Christian people like the Kashiwagis.

Of course all of this made for very hectic schedules, which went something like this: Ruth taught at Shoin High School on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, which meant that she left the house at about 8:30 a.m. and returned at 4:30 p.m. She taught groups of 25 students in each class and she met each class every other week, so she met a total of about 500 different students once every two weeks! I taught at Shoin all day on Tuesdays and Wednesdays and one half day on Thursdays, after which I travelled about one hour to Ishibashi to teach two classes at *Handai* and then another one hour commute to home. I travelled back to Ishibashi (about one hour, again) for the Friday afternoon class with the people from the Law Department. In addition to this were other classes in Nagase and Ishibashi, plus

Japanese language study of various sorts. We tried to keep Saturdays free and on Sundays we mostly attended church in Ishibashi, though we also sometimes attended the MB church in Mukogawa, which was the MB congregation nearest to our residence. We tried to squeeze in a visit to the Kobe Union Church once a month or so. There were other assignments and projects that came up from time to time and our schedules varied somewhat from year to year. For a while on my way home from Shoin I stopped in the main offices of the Mainichi Newspaper in downtown Osaka to teach an English class. I also taught at the IBM headquarters in Osaka for a while and for a brief time I took over classes left behind by a New Zealander who had developed his own little “school” that met in the home of a widow not too far from the Mukogawa MB church. One year I was hired (through my connections with former Roman Catholic priest Bob Kellen) by the Matsushita Electric/Panasonic Corporation to translate the English version of their annual report. There were miscellaneous meetings with informal groups of students, and ESS, Inter Varsity and MB camps, house guests who were passing through, occasional “fellowship” get-togethers with the MB missionaries, etc. If “normal” life in Japan meant keeping a very hectic schedule, then we had “gone native.”

One adjustment that made our lives a bit easier was the purchase of a small, 360 c.c. (basically a 21 cubic inch air-cooled motorcycle engine) Honda automobile, a precursor to the larger Honda Civic (**Photo #24**). In Japan at that time, any vehicle that had an engine size of 360 c.c.s or smaller did not legally count as a real automobile and was not required to have a registered parking space, as was necessary to register a regular automobile. We were able to park our little car in an open area just below the bamboo grove in front of our residence, and, almost miraculously, all five of us fit in well enough that one summer we drove all the way to Lake Nojiri in Nagano Prefecture and then on up to Tokyo. It was the only car ever built with more space on the inside than on the outside, we liked to say. We bought the car because it made many of our destinations much closer than using Japan’s wonderfully efficient public transportation system. The one hour and 15 minute train trip to the church and *Handai* campus in Ishibashi, for example, essentially involved travelling along two sides of a triangle with two (or three) train transfers along the way and then long walks to and from the stations, but by car it was a straight drive that took about 30 minutes from door to door. Trips to Kobe Union Church and Canadian Academy also involved long walks from the nearest stations, and up a very steep hill in the case of the Canadian Academy. Driving to Shoin in East Osaka took longer than using the trains, so we never did that, but the little car did simplify our lives somewhat.

Re-reading some of our correspondence from those days indicates that we were conflicted with deep ambivalences about what we were doing. On the positive side, we felt that we were playing a unique role that only a foreigner could play in Japan at that time, serving as a “bridge” to make a whole variety of connections: English language learners with a native speaker; Japanese people with foreigners; Japanese people with no connections with the church with their first church experiences; Japanese MBs with understandings of Christian faith somewhat different from the narrow fundamentalism of the missionaries. We were also receiving positive “strokes” from many friends, Japanese and foreign alike. For example, our MB missionary colleague and friend, Pauline Peters, wrote in a letter while we were still in California:

I have no doubt in my mind that the Ishibashi church genuinely appreciated you, and miss you, especially Arita-san (pastor). Had a long talk with Taeko-san (sic) (pastor’s wife) the other day, and she’d welcome you with four arms if you came back. The comments that I have heard are all that you understood them, you liked them, and you just fit into Japan... If you don’t believe any other Japanese, you can believe Mariko (Pauline’s room mate and friend), she is brutally frank, and she says you will certainly come back to Japan, because you belong here.

Our kids seemed to be doing well, receiving fine schooling, with wonderful friends in a very cosmopolitan environment, and having all kinds of exciting experiences—such as Terri and Connie being part of the opening ceremony for EXPO 70 in Osaka where Connie danced along with her CA classmates and the popular American singer and TV personality, Dina Shore, and Terri presented flowers to the chairman of EXPO 70. Terri was almost permitted to present a bouquet to the Crown Prince, the son of and later the Emperor of all of Japan, but that was cancelled at the last minute when someone realized that sixth grader Terri would be taller than the Emperor-to-be, so perhaps it would be more appropriate for a Japanese child to make the presentation. Our children were growing up in a much bigger world than we had experienced in Reedley. They had not always felt this way, but as we discussed our (and their) futures, they told us that it was OK with them if we stayed on in Japan.

Nevertheless, we were struggling with many frustrations and concerns. Reviewing correspondence from that period reveals a series of roller-coaster ups and downs. There were times of feeling great satisfaction in what we were doing, and many other times of deep discouragement and depression. We did not really feel that our teaching experiences were rewarding at all, for reasons that are listed above. In fact, Ruth handed in her resignation from her position at Shoin at the end of the first year because her teaching situation was just too frustrating. She felt that she was spending too much time away from

the family and she was wasting her time and the time of the students and everyone else given the nature of her teaching assignment. Shoin made some adjustments in her teaching assignment and rearranged her schedule so that she needed to teach only two days each week instead of three, so she continued on, but neither of us found much satisfaction in our teaching assignments. For me, it was a professional dead-end. Financially we were living pretty much “hand-to-mouth.”

By the spring of 1970 we had been in Japan for a total of nearly six years. I was 35 years old and we had not yet given any serious thought to building up an account for our retirement. Terri was ready to enter junior high school and we were feeling that it was time to think more seriously about our kids’ futures, as well as our own. Was it right for us to commit them to spending almost all of their childhood years as foreigners in Japan, apart from their own extended family and culture? We were aware of children of expatriates in Japan (and elsewhere) who seemed to be very well adjusted and highly productive human beings—but we also knew too many who struggled deeply with issues of identity, feeling like they belonged neither in their home country because of years of separation, nor in Japan where they were perpetual foreigners (*gaijin*). They were “third culture children” with no real cultural “home.” (Missionary anthropologist Paul Hiebert, who had grown up in India, is quoted as saying that for him his only real “home” was in an airplane flying between India and North America.) Our daughters told us that it was fine with them if we stayed on in Japan, because they were proud of their school, had many good friends, and were enjoying many things about their lives in Japan, but we wondered.

Furthermore, our church relationships were definitely a mixture of positive and not-so-positive experiences. It had been our intention that we would participate in the life of the Ishibashi congregation as fellow committed lay persons, contributing as we could to the work of the church. We expected that this might include teaching English Bible classes in the church, but for a long while Arita-sensei gave no indication that he was interested in supporting that, and we felt that there was little point in initiating programs that the pastor did not support. We felt that the people in the church did not really know how to relate to us, since we had once been “real missionaries,” but now we were something else, and in a culture where roles and statuses are supposed to be clearly defined, this was a problem. I was asked to preach a couple of times, but I was not eager to do this since getting my thoughts into Japanese was a very time-consuming process and I was already too busy. So, after one year of mostly sitting in the pews, going through the motions of traditional forms of Sunday morning worship services, with no Christian education program for the children and few activities for adults beyond the worship services,

Ruth and our children were ready to “rebel.” Their rebellion took the form of switching their participation to the Kobe Union Church where they felt that they could both give and receive more than what was happening in Ishibashi. I joined them from time to time, but I stayed on at Ishibashi for a while, beginning some classes eventually, and then I began to attend the Mukogawa church, which was closer to our residence and where pastor Fuwa and others seemed to be very welcoming. I eventually taught classes of various kinds in the Ishibashi, Nagase, and Mukogawa MB churches, with varying degrees of cooperation and support from the pastors and church members. The results of our experiment with a new form of mission were decidedly mixed, both in our professional activities and in our lives in the church.

We faced some immediate practical challenges. Our 620 square foot, two-story Japanese house was too small for our three growing girls—who were, after all, still Americans who needed more space than their Japanese counterparts seemed to be able to get by with. Besides, we did not really have room to accommodate our many guests. But a larger house would mean higher rent, which would mean that we would need more income, which would mean different job arrangements. So we began to explore alternatives, both in Japan and in California.

In our neighborhood was a larger but much older Japanese house that stood empty. The house was not in good condition since it had been built 60 years earlier, around 1910. The kitchen had a dirt floor and a hand water pump. The house did not have a flush toilet, something that was not that unusual in those days. There was a dead and broken tree in the garden. Perhaps, we thought (or what were we really thinking?), we could exchange the inconvenience for the extra space, without having to increase our income too much, so we initiated contact with the owner and we tried to negotiate, over a period of several months, the possibility of renting his house. Finally the owner, after numerous delays, put such a high rental price on the house that it became clear to us that he did not want to rent the place to us. That meant that we needed to start our search for different housing (and more income) all over again if we were going to stay in Japan.

Meanwhile, we explored options for employment back in the U.S. I sent several inquiries about international student advisor positions in various colleges. But then Pacific College English professor, Wilfred Martens, informed us that Paul Hiebert was leaving his position as Professor of Anthropology at Pacific College and Wilfred asked whether he should pass my name along to the administration. I eagerly applied for and was appointed to that position. Our decision about the future of our family had been made. We were going “home.” What remained for us in Japan was to disengage. I found a

person (Louis Payne, a Kobe Union Church friend) who was qualified and willing to replace me mid-year at Shoin and *Handai* and that seemed to be agreeable all around (in spite of rumors that Payne was actually an undercover CIA agent), so we packed up and left Japan in July 1970.

Leaving proved to be not so easy. In addition to packing what we wanted to take with us or ship to Fresno, we also needed to sell, give away, or otherwise dispose of everything else, including our car, furniture, household goods, etc. We needed to arrange to receive the deposits that we had made on our house rental and our telephone—all at the very last moment since we still needed to use all of these things. Fortunately, during the morning of our departure Louis and Bernie Payne arrived to help us with some of the very last cleaning and other details, so we could catch the local train with all of our carry-on luggage, just in time to make it to the *Shinkansen* (Bullet Train) station in Osaka, just in time to basically walk across the platform to board our train for Yokohama, doing little more than wave and say goodbye to the small crowd of well-wishers who were there to see us off. It was a most inappropriate way to end those two and one-half years in Japan—but we made it!

We left Yokohama the next day on the passenger liner, *President Wilson*. Long-time friend Tanaka Jun-san was there to see us off, with a watermelon as his farewell gift. The trip was a wonderful two week vacation on the Pacific Ocean. The ship's staff provided entertainment for our children, the food was excellent, and Ruth and I enjoyed singing with our new Canadian friends, Walter and Sonya Kunkel. It seems sad that the *Wilson* and that whole class of passenger ships no longer ply the seas. We had a great time—though Terri threatened to refuse to re-board the rocking (No, not the musical or fun kind of rocking.) ship after our one-day stopover in Hawaii.

We had completed our contracts and left Japan on the *President Wilson*, but that was by no means the end of our relationship with people at Osaka Shoin—or Japan. More details will follow, but we continued to exchange occasional communications with Shinoda-sensei until he became ill and passed away in 2015; with Sugito-sensei until she passed away; and we continue to correspond with Takemoto-sensei and a few former students.

One of my last contacts with Shoin people in Japan happened in 2003 when I was invited to a “thank you” lunch with three former students from more than 30 years before. They were now mature, middle-aged women. We enjoyed a beautiful lunch in the kitchen of the Japanese chefs' school that was directed by one of the former students, in the house that had once been Harry Friesen's student center. For what, I asked, did I deserve their thanks? Their answer was that I was one of the most important persons in their lives because I was the first foreigner with whom they had experienced a personal

relationship and that this had opened the door for them to the rest of the world beyond Japan. I had helped them move beyond their narrow and limited old world into a much bigger and more open new one. That was not in my course syllabi, nor was it something that was high on our list of intentions in going to Japan, but I suppose an expanded view of the world is a good thing if it is one by-product of our two and one-half years at Osaka Shoin Women's College.

DISSERTATION RESEARCH: KOBE, 1975-1976.

By the summer of 1975 I had finished my course work and passed my examinations for the Ph.D. in sociology at UCSB. I was in "all but dissertation" (ABD) status. Actually, that was not so easily accomplished. First, while he and Janet were having divorce and custody disputes while on a sabbatical in Israel, Professor O'Dea, the chair of my Ph.D. committee, was diagnosed with lymphoma. With help from U.S. Senator Allen Cranston, Dr. O'Dea was able to extricate himself from his legal problems in Israel (He had violated a restraining order that prohibited him from contacting their son.) and return to Santa Barbara for treatment, so my oral examinations were held in his hospital room. Before I finished my project, another committee member, Japanese religious historian (and one-time American Baptist missionary in Japan), Dr. Wilbur Fridell, became extremely ill with liver disease. Dr. Fridell managed to recover enough to finally sign my dissertation, though I have always wondered whether he was ever well enough to actually read it. Dr. O'Dea passed away before I finished my dissertation. After the death of Dr. O'Dea, another committee member, Dr. Charles Spaulding, agreed to serve as committee chair, though he did not really know enough about my topic to be very helpful. Dr. Spaulding retired before I finished my work, but he continued to serve as my committee chair until I finally completed the project in December 1979, on the last day of my ninth year in the Ph.D. program. In spite of all of this, I had developed a proposal to study relationships in Protestant families in Japan. Perhaps it will be worthwhile to describe very briefly what my dissertation was all about, since I spent a lot of time, effort and money working on it.

One of the basic notions in sociology is that ideas help shape how we act. That might seem like a self-evident proposition except that Karl Marx and others made a very convincing argument that it was the other way around. That is, our social (and especially our economic) experiences shape how we think. We use ideas to justify our actions. Max Weber did a study of economic behavior to show that Marx's argument did not tell the whole story. For example, Weber did a comparative study of the economic activities of Protestants and Catholics and found that there were a lot of differences, so these different sets of religious ideas did make a difference in the economic behavior of people. More specifically,

Protestants were more individualistic and “rational” in their approach to both religion and to financial matters than Catholics and this helped them to better fit into a modern capitalist economy, so Protestants were more likely than Catholics to be entrepreneurs.

What happens, I wondered, to the family relationships of Japanese people who become Protestant Christians? Does the change in religion lead to a change in family patterns? If so, what do these changes look like? Do they last over several generations? And by what method could one figure out answers to these questions?

My first challenge was to find out what Japanese Protestant converts thought a Christian family ought to look like, so I started with the Protestant missionaries who brought Christianity to Japan in the 1870s and 1880s. I checked biographies, books, articles and sermons that had been written by or about these early missionaries and found exactly what I expected. They emphasized nuclear family relationships that were fairly similar to what we still hold to be the ideal: freely chosen marriages based on “love”; only one spouse (at a time); separate residences for parents and married children; mutual intimacy, respect and relative equality between spouses; inheritance patterns that divided estates somewhat equally among the survivors, etc. That was the easy part since all of this was written in English.

But most of the early Protestant converts in Japan received their Christian teachings not from foreign missionaries but from Japanese pastors and church leaders, so I needed to know what the early Japanese Protestant leaders taught their followers about what a Christian family ought to be like. I visited several libraries in the Kobe-Osaka-Kyoto area and found enough Japanese language biographies and sermons and journal articles to reach the conclusion that the Japanese church leaders preached and taught pretty much the same vision for Christian family life in Japan that the missionaries had advocated (and lived, for the most part). It was hard enough to even find these old materials in libraries but then I also had to read them. That was not really as difficult as it might seem since I already had a modest ability to read the written Japanese language and I was only interested in getting the basic ideas. I was not trying to translate or even understand everything. There was a lot of repetition, too, so once I became familiar with the basic terminology and thought patterns, I managed to accomplish my goals—sometimes with some help from others.

Of course what the Protestant church leaders, both foreign and domestic, were advocating was a family system that was quite different from the patterns of family life that were common in Japan at that time. Japanese marriages during the Tokugawa period (1603-1867) (among the samurai class particularly) were typically arranged by the parents (*miai-kekkon*)—sometimes with veto power by the children.

Married sons (especially the eldest) and their wives and children resided with the husband's parents, often in three or even four generation extended households. Relationships between brides and their mothers-in-law were notoriously conflicted and the husband was expected to side with his mother. Divorce was easy and frequent, typically because of childlessness or because of the bride's insubordination to her mother-in-law. Husbands were free to keep mistresses, if they could afford it. All legal responsibilities rested with the male head of the household. Inheritance usually went to the oldest son. If there was no son, one was adopted into the family, often as the husband of a daughter (if there was one). So in the Japanese context, Protestant ideas about family life were pretty radical. Remember, I am talking about the Japanese family in the late 19th century.

My next challenge was to find out what family patterns were actually like in the households of Protestant converts. I was interested in "ordinary" Japanese Protestant households, not the experiences of famous or heroic Christian leaders, so I started my search by visiting the pastors of several of the old Protestant churches in Kobe and Osaka. For example, the Congregational church in Kobe, just a few blocks from our residence, was the second oldest Protestant church in all of Japan, founded in 1874. I explained what I had in mind and asked the pastors if they had any elderly members who were second generation Christians, the children of early converts to Protestant Christianity, who might be willing to be interviewed by me. I was initially introduced to five elderly church members who were in their 70s and 80s who could tell me about the family lives of their parents, most of whom had converted to Christianity in the 1880s and 1890s. Then I started the most fascinating part of my research project. I tape-recorded many hours of long, mostly open-ended interviews in the Japanese language with these good people. They were retired and happy to talk—and I was equally happy to listen. If I could not understand what they were saying, I just acted like I did because I could listen to the tape later. That way my informants could just keep on talking.

What I found was exactly what I think Max Weber would have predicted. Family life in the Protestant convert households in which my informants had grown up was indeed quite different from typical Japanese patterns of that era. They largely followed the nuclear family patterns that they had been taught by their church leaders. They were radically deviant from what Japanese culture (and even the law) called for. I also asked my second generation informants about their own family experiences and found that they were more nuclear than their fellow countrymen, but not nearly as "radical" about it as their convert parents had been. I then asked for the addresses of the grandchildren of the converts and sent questionnaires to 85 of these third generation Japanese Protestant Christians. I received useable

questionnaires from 45 of these third generation Protestants. I was disappointed in the response rate (53%), even though that is still quite good for a mailed survey. I found that third generation family patterns differed little from patterns of family relationships in the general population in Japan during their era. This was true for two reasons. First, Japan had changed. There was a very dramatic change in family structures in Japan that began during the 1960s and continues on today. The old expectations are largely gone and this transition from the old world to the new happened much more rapidly in Japan than in the West, where change was much more gradual. Nuclear families have become the new normal in Japan, too. The other change is that the third generation was far less “Christian” than their parents and grandparents had been. Many continued to think of themselves as in some sense Christian but they did not attend church, read the Bible, pray, or hold the religious beliefs that had been important to their predecessors. Only about one in four maintained beliefs and practices that were recognizably “Christian.”

In the course of my readings and interviews, I came upon two situations that I thought were so remarkable that I eventually published reports on them in the journal *Japanese Religions*. The first was known as the “Japanese Bride Incident” that happened in the 1880s and 1890s. One of the leading Japanese Presbyterian ministers of that era, Tamura Naomi, spent several years studying in America, beginning in 1882. After his return to Japan in 1886, he wrote a popular little book entitled *Beikoku no Hanayome*, or “The American Bride,” in which he compared the Japanese and American systems of marital and familial relationships. He wrote his little book during a time when things Western were temporarily in vogue in Japan, so he became a kind of celebrity, travelling here and there giving lectures advocating family reform in Japan—in a nuclear direction, of course. In 1892 he went to America again and while he was there he basically translated and adapted the popular little book that he had written in Japanese, this time for an American audience. The title of the new version of his book was *The Japanese Bride*. As before, he was very critical of the traditional Japanese family system.

By the time Tamura-sensei returned to Japan in 1893, the political winds had shifted. The Japanese government was determined to base their new, “modern” industrial (and militarily powerful) society on Confucian and Japanese, not western values. So when Tamura-sensei returned, he was viciously attacked in the Japanese press for betraying his country by criticizing its values before the world. A formal apology for embarrassing his nation was demanded from Tamura. His denomination was also attacked for not being loyal to their nation, so the Presbyterian leaders also asked Tamura to issue a public apology. His response was that he told the truth when he wrote his little book in Japanese and

he also told the truth when he said the same things in English. If a Christian minister has one obligation, he said, it is to speak the truth. So he refused to apologize. For his stubbornness, he lost his ministerial status and his membership in the denomination—from which he resigned and established his own independent church in Tokyo. Family matters, it turned out, were intensely political at that time, and the Christian churches were generally willing to do what it took to stay in the good graces of the government and the public. I discovered that Japanese language histories of Christianity in Japan frequently make reference to this “incident” but most English language histories do not mention it at all. I tried to correct this oversight by publishing my article.

The second discovery came in the course of my interviews with one of my informants, a warm and gracious woman in her sixties for whom I had great affection and respect. During one of my visits to her fine old home in near-by Ashiya, Mrs. Nishimura opened the door of a built-in storage cupboard (*oshiire*) in her room to show me their family *zushi*, a kind of shrine or altar for remembering and honoring family members who had passed away. Most Japanese households who have lost a member to death have a Buddhist memorial altar somewhere in the house to help them remember and show respect for their ancestors. In a lacquer cabinet called *Butsudan* (literally something like “Buddha cabinet”) they keep several items: perhaps an image of a Buddha figure, a text from the Buddhist scriptures, a small container in which they burn incense, a small bell, and there is always at least one *ihai*, a small (about 1.5” by 3.5”), thin slip of wood on which the posthumous names of deceased persons are written in fine calligraphy, usually done by a Buddhist priest. Special rituals are conducted in front of these memorial altars, sometimes daily but certainly on designated anniversaries of the death and on other special days. A priest or a family member will ring the bell, light some incense, hold their hands together in a gesture of respect and appreciation, and either recite a Buddhist chant or pause silently for a few moments of meditation. Family members might do some version of this as often as daily—at least for a while after the death. Many Protestant missionaries and Japanese Christian people say this is “idol worship” but I have always thought it is something different from that, having more to do with gratitude, honor and respect than “worship.” That is what Roman Catholic Christians in Japan think, too.

The Nishimura family suffered two tragic losses within a brief period of time during World War II, both to illness rather than to the war itself. First, my informant Mrs. Nishimura’s father-in-law who had converted to Christianity in his youth, died, and then her husband, who had grown up in this Christian home and was himself a very active churchman, also passed away, leaving my informant and

her mother-in-law alone with the children. The two women approached the pastor of their congregation (the large Eiko Methodist church in downtown Kobe) to ask if something could be done to help them express their grief—and their gratitude for the lives of their Christian husbands. The pastor suggested that they purchase a cabinet of the type that is used in Buddhist household memorials, which they did, but they selected a cabinet that was a maroon color rather than the more customary black lacquer, and of a relatively modest size (and expense) considering the economic status of the Nishimura family. These cabinets are usually called *Butsudan*, a clearly Buddhistic term (*Butsu* is one Japanese word for Buddha.), but the Nishimuras called their small family altar a *zushi*, a more generic term for a shrine or an altar. In the cabinet they placed a cross and photos of the deceased persons along with the typical *ihai*, but this time with the given (not Buddhist) names of the deceased men written in calligraphy done by the pastor rather than a Buddhist priest. There was a Bible on top of the cabinet. There was a container for burning incense and a small bell, of the type usually found in a *Butsudan*. On special memorial days such as birthdays and around Easter time, the pastor called together a group of the deceased persons' fellow church members who would gather with the family in front of the open cabinet to reminisce, read passages from the Bible, sing hymns, burn incense, and offer prayers of gratitude and celebration of the lives of their deceased relative and friend. The whole thing had been very meaningful for Mrs. Nishimura and she was grateful to the pastor and to the congregation for what they had done for her and her family. She felt at peace, she said.

But the pastor eventually left the congregation and the aging church members no longer gathered for their memorial celebrations. For a time, the family continued the memorial observances on their own. Mrs. Nishimura said she felt lonely. Several years later, after Mrs. Nishimura, my original informant, had passed away, I again visited the family. By this time the family had stopped their own observances in front of their *zushi*, which sat unopened in its cupboard (*oshiire*). The next (third) generation Mrs. Nishimura was also a widow and she did not know what to do with the *zushi*. She did not even seem to know much about the story behind it. She asked me what I thought she should do with it! I asked for her permission to explain the situation to the new pastor of their Eiko church and I had a very interesting conversation with him. He was not only unaware of the situation in the Nishimura household, but he had never heard of such a thing in his years of church ministry. My last contact with the Nishimura family happened in 2001 after they had moved to a new smaller house. They did not think they had room in their new house for the old *zushi* and no one paid any attention to it anyhow, so they had contracted with a shop that specializes in things related to Buddhist altars to dispose of the

cabinet in an appropriate manner. This long and fascinating experiment in “contextualizing” Christian faith in the Japanese cultural situation had come to an end. The editors of *Japanese Religions* agreed that these stories were worth publishing, but I was disappointed that I never received any comments at all on my reports.

Of course Ruth and I needed to deal with various family circumstances in order to make possible this excursion to Japan for dissertation research. We needed a place to stay and some income to supplement the half salary I received from the College for my year-long sabbatical leave-of-absence. Through our friends, Frank and Martha Kuhlman, we were able to arrange for teaching jobs (full time for Ruth, part time for me) and an apartment at the Palmore Institute in downtown Kobe. Palmore was a 100 year old night school, originally sponsored by the Methodist mission, that provided English language instruction, mostly in the evening and mostly for working adults. The school provided the good service of helping people of modest means gain one step up by learning English at a reasonable cost, and they attempted to do this as Christians by, among other things, providing a Chapel service a couple of times each week. Many of the students were from minority groups in Japan such as Chinese and Korean ancestry. We felt very comfortable with many of the people at Palmore and with what they were attempting to do. We were pleased that we could contribute, while also having our housing problem solved and the supplementary income that we needed.

Palmore provided us with enough space for our children to join us but Terri decided to remain at McLane High School in Fresno for her senior year. FPC, CSUF and NBA basketball coach Ron Adams, then wife Marcille, Beverly (Bowen) and Charles Lord, and friend Elaine Wahl moved into our house on Kerckhoff with Terri, so we felt fine about her staying on in Fresno. Connie and Karen joined us in Kobe for the fall semester. They were both students in the Canadian Academy where they were able to reconnect with at least some of their old friends from previous stays in Japan. Connie decided that she missed her good friends at Immanuel High School in Reedley, so during Thanksgiving vacation she returned to California where Grandma Neufeld graciously provided Connie with a place to live while she attended Immanuel High School nearby. One of Karen’s adventures was having her good friends from Fresno, Jill Janzen and Suzanne Martens, join her in Japan for some sightseeing.

Another adventure was a visit to Korea by Ruth, Karen and me under a program sponsored by the Korean government that hosted former servicemen in Korea. We took an overnight ferry from Shimonoseki to Pusan and then a train up to Seoul to join the group of ex-servicemen. A highlight was a tour of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) between South and North Korea, which is treated as a kind of

sacred space. Karen was not allowed to desecrate the holy DMZ area by wearing jeans, so she had to borrow a skirt from a waitress in a restaurant just outside the entrance to the DMZ. Most of the government tour involved visiting military sites and a lot of patriotic hype, so after a few days, the three of us left the group and continued on our own tour of historical and cultural sites. While in Korea we had exchanged all of our Japanese *yen* for Korean *won*, not knowing that we would not be able to change the money back into *yen* when we were back in Japan, so we had to borrow money from a manager in the airport in Hiroshima to buy train tickets back to Kobe, since we carried no cash and those were the days before credit cards were in wide use. Of course we returned the money as soon as we returned to Kobe.

We worked hard during this one-year (1975-76) sojourn in Kobe, Ruth with full time teaching plus household tasks and many social activities with Palmore faculty and students and many of our friends from previous stays in Japan. Needless to say, I was busy with research activities of various kinds and preliminary writing of parts of my dissertation, while also teaching classes at Palmore a couple of evenings each week. But we still had time and energy to reconnect with Japanese MB, Osaka Shoin, and other friends and to continue our exploration of what it means to live in Japan.

SHORTER STAYS: 1986 AND 1991.

After finally completing my Ph.D. in December, 1979, we settled into a more normal routine of family, school, church, and neighborhood life in Fresno. I served a term as moderator (lay leader) in the College Community Church and had various administrative responsibilities at Fresno Pacific College. In 1981 I was asked to serve as interim dean of the College, which I did for two years before accepting a full appointment to the position of dean, which I held for another two years. As I will explain later, President Janzen and I both resigned in order to open the way for the College to “broaden the base” by appointing non-Mennonites to top positions of administrative leadership (President and Dean). After completing my four years in the dean’s office, I applied for and was granted another one year leave of absence (1985-1986). Part of my application for the leave was a proposal to do a research project that would involve another stay in Japan.

In 1972 a consortium of Mennonite and Brethren in Christ denominations in Canada and the U.S. cooperated in a major “church member profile” research project. The findings were presented by Leland Harder and Howard Kauffman under the title *Anabaptists Four Centuries Later*. The project used a long questionnaire to produce “profiles” of the beliefs and practices, religious and other, of the members of the larger Mennonite-related denominations in North America. I wondered how the

members of Mennonite churches in Japan might be similar to and different from their counterparts in North America, so Ruth and I spent the fall semester, 1985, living in Elkhart, Indiana, working in the library and sitting in on some classes at the Associated (now Anabaptist) Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS). I tried to learn something about the backgrounds of the various Mennonite groups in Japan and I made some initial steps toward adapting the very long profile questionnaire to the situation in Japan.

In January, 1986, we again moved to Kobe, Japan. We were able to rent an apartment on the grounds of Palmore Institute where we had lived and worked ten years earlier. Our children had all graduated from college by this time. Terri and Connie were married and Karen was living in Boston, so we did not need to think about making special arrangements for them. Ruth did some part time teaching and a lot of exploring and shopping in “recycle shops” (thrift stores) which had just begun to come into vogue in Japan. I was busy preparing to administer an abbreviated version of the questionnaire that had been used in North America. Virtually all of the translation work was done by Mrs. Ueda Sadako, a member of the MB church in Mukogawa who had returned to Japan from the U.S. during her teen years in the midst of World War II. She was a wonderful woman who made my whole project possible because of her generosity with her time and her bi-lingual fluency. I was also busy trying to contact Mennonite church leaders in various parts of Japan (Hokkaido, Yamaguchi, Kyushu, Tokyo, and the MBs in the Osaka area). Without their understanding and cooperation, my project would have been impossible.

I think I need to explain briefly some of the methodological issues that are involved in administering a questionnaire. One of the biggest challenges is to minimize the likelihood of systematic “bias” in the sample of people who are asked to respond to the questionnaire. Using a sample is important because it is very expensive and time-consuming (if not impossible) to contact every person in a large population. There were nearly 200,000 members in Mennonite and Brethren churches in more than 1,600 congregations in North America in 1972 so it was practically impossible to contact all of them. So about 5000 were selected to receive questionnaires—but how were these 5000 selected? The easiest way would be to contact pastors that one knows and ask them to give the questionnaires to some of the people in their congregation. But, of course, this would mean that only pastors who are somewhat like the surveyors would be contacted, and these pastors would likely contact mostly “good” church members who were easily met because they come to church more often than other more marginal members. Clearly, some steps must be taken to minimize the risk of ending up with mainly one type

of church members who are not representative of the whole. In the North American project, two steps were used to reduce the odds that the sample would be biased (probably in the direction of good and faithful members, leaving out the marginal ones who show up infrequently). First, lists of congregations in each denomination were collected from denominational headquarters. Then a set number of congregations was randomly selected from each list, choosing every *n*th number on the list, thereby reducing the risk that just one type of congregation would be selected. Then each of the selected congregations was asked to send a list of all of their members. The researchers then randomly selected (by choosing every *n*th name) a specified number of members. These selected members were invited to meet with researchers hired to distribute and receive back completed questionnaires. At the end of the process, researchers received questionnaires from 3,670 members. This complicated (and expensive) procedure produced a very high response rate and a sample that probably represents the whole population of members quite accurately.

I thought I needed to try to do something like that in Japan, but, of course, the numbers of Mennonites in Japan were much smaller (a total of about 2,500 in 1986) and I did not have a budget to send out researchers to administer the questionnaires, so I had to rely on pastors for help. I did do a sort of “random” sample of MB congregations because there were about 30 at the time, but, for the most part, I tried to explain to pastors what I was trying to do and I had to trust them to minimize bias in distributing the questionnaires. I am quite sure that the sample in Japan was not nearly as “clean” as the sample in North America. That is, I am pretty sure that the good and faithful members were over represented and the marginal ones were under represented in the Japanese sample. Nevertheless, I think I did the best I could under the circumstances.

The most fun part of the project was a week-long Shinkansen train trip that Ruth and I did to visit church leaders in the several areas in Japan where Mennonite churches are located. We were able to make this very long trip for a reasonable price because the Japan National Railway made available what they called the “Full Moon Pass,” seven days of travel anywhere in Japan for married couples whose ages totaled 88 years or more. We qualified for this special pass, so I spent many hours poring over the huge catalog of all train, ferry and bus schedules throughout Japan to plan a trip that would take us first southwest to Kyushu, then north up to Hokkaido (with a very brief stopover in Nagasaki to see the memorial from the A-bombing at the end of WW II), then back down to Tokyo, and, finally, home to Kobe. In each place we met with Japanese church leaders (and old missionary friends) to explain face-to-face what the project was all about and to solicit their help. I have always really enjoyed

rail travel in Japan, so this was great fun for me, especially since most of the trip was on some version of the “Bullet Train” (*Shinkansen*).

Not surprisingly, I found that Mennonites in Japan are not that much different from Mennonites in North America, nor are the various Mennonite denominations in Japan substantially different from each other in their religious beliefs and practices. I did find a couple of interesting differences, however. Japanese Mennonites were much more likely to express pacifist convictions than their counterparts in North America, probably because popular sentiments in Japan were much more supportive of pacifism than the more militaristic thinking of most people in America, Mennonites included. Another difference had to do with belief in hell. North American Mennonites found it much easier to express belief in hell than their Japanese co-religionists, probably because the impact of the idea that everyone outside of faith in Jesus would be consigned by God to eternal punishment was much more immediate and troublesome in Japan than in North America. For example, we remember a tearful conversation with our MB Christian maid, Asako-san, one evening when she asked us to make sense of the idea that her ancestors, who lived on the island of Shikoku and who had no possibility of even hearing the Christian message, could now be suffering eternal punishment in hell because they did not believe in Jesus. We tried to assure her that God is, finally, loving and just, and that everything would somehow turn out right in the end. But the responses to the questionnaire indicated that the whole idea of hell seems to be much easier to accept in North America than in Japan. (For much more on what I found in this research project, see my longer report in the April 1993 edition of the *Mennonite Quarterly Review*.)

Ruth and I were able to enjoy one more really big adventure during our spring 1986 stay in Japan. With the encouragement of our Palmore friends, the Kuhlman, who had done something similar, we decided to do a trip to the People’s Republic of China, which had recently opened its doors to foreign tourists. We decided to do a fairly short trip, visiting only the southern part of the country, so we flew to Hong Kong, where we applied for visas to the PRC. During the day that was required to process our visa applications, we took a water taxi across the Pearl River to visit the former Portuguese Colony of Macau, where we happened upon a performance of traditional Chinese opera in a tent that was somehow attached to and suspended from the branches of a large tree. While in Hong Kong, we also visited with some Mennonite Central Committee workers, who encouraged us to make contact with a hostel in Guangzhou (formerly Canton) that was operated by one of the government-recognized “Three-Self” churches in the city, so we decided to do that.

Since many people around the world have some ability to communicate in English, and since the Japanese had occupied parts of China for several years before and during World War II, we expected that we would surely find people with whom we could communicate in either English or Japanese. But, alas, it was not so easy. I could recognize many of the Chinese characters in place names, but I did not know how they were pronounced in China, so we did a lot of pointing in our travel guide for taxi drivers and others. After a train ride from Hong Kong to Canton, we did finally find our way to the Dong Shan Church, where we slept under mosquito nets and “showered” with a cold water faucet and a bucket, but we also met married couple Richard Chen and Lucy Zhang, staff people at the church, who became our good friends and whom we eventually helped to come to America for theological studies. We flew from the “westernized” city of Canton to the spectacular and famous rock formations along the Li River near Guilin, often portrayed in Chinese art. After a day of being utterly amazed by what we saw during our river cruise through these incredible rock formations, we took an overnight train from Guilin to Changsha.

We were unable to obtain tickets for a “soft sleeper” (first class) car, so we had to settle for “hard sleeper” tickets, a considerable step down from what we had hoped for. We boarded a train that had originated far to the south and was headed for Beijing in the north, so the folks we encountered in our car had already been traveling for some time. They were mostly country people, sitting on bunks, including ours, and they had spread banana peels, peanut shells and other debris pretty much everywhere. Needless to say they were far more shocked to see us big, white Americans enter their space than we were to find them occupying ours! It is not possible to express how stunned we were when the man occupying the bunk between ours (I was on the top bunk, Ruth on the bottom, with a middle bunk in between.) spoke to us in broken English, “May I help you?” He was an electrical engineer on his way back to Beijing. He had studied written English many years earlier but had never spoken English before. We had a most interesting chat as our train rolled through the Chinese countryside.

We chose to visit the city of Changsha for several reasons. One was that it was not a major tourist destination, and we wanted to visit one place like that. Communist Party Chairman Mao Tse Tung had been born nearby and had attended school in Changsha, so that was one reason to visit the area. One other thing that Changsha was famous for was a museum built around an ancient grave monument that contained the mummified body of a woman. After a couple of days in Changsha, we flew back to Canton where we again talked with Richard and Lucy (and ate a meal together that had been prepared

by Richard—our best meal in China.) at the church hostel before boarding an overnight ferry that took us down the Pearl River to Hong Kong, where we caught our return flight to Japan. We felt overwhelmed and blessed by what we had seen and experienced in China.

Another short-term stay in Japan happened in 1991. Sometime during 1990 we received a note from our friends Gilbert and Maxine Bascom asking if anyone in their circle of acquaintances was interested in replacing them in their teaching position at Kwansei Gakuin University (KG) for one semester during the spring of 1991 while they were on leave in the U.S. The Bascoms were Methodist missionaries whom we had learned to know at the Kobe Union Church during the time our kids were students in the Canadian Academy, where Gilbert served as Headmaster before moving to K.G., where he taught English. I asked for another leave from Fresno Pacific to complete projects that I had started earlier (note that I did not publish my report on the Mennonites in Japan until 1993 and I needed to finish some other projects, also). I was granted the leave and we negotiated with the Bascoms that we would move into their large western style missionary residence on the K.G. campus and I would cover his classes during the first part of the academic year in Japan, which begins April 1. Ruth was busy as administrator of the Older Adults Social Services (OASIS) program at Fresno Pacific, so she did not feel free to spend an entire six months away, so she arrived later than I and left before I did, but we both enjoyed another very interesting period of time in Japan during the spring and summer of 1991.

Kwansei Gakuin University is one of the large private universities in western Japan. It was founded by Methodist missionaries in about 1880 as a sister institution of Palmore Institute and the Eiko Church in Kobe. The K.G. campus, located in a suburb between Kobe and Osaka, is spacious and attractive, unlike many urban campuses which are little more than clusters of high rise buildings jammed together in the middle of a city. The campus is near the Nigawa River and is in the shadow of a small mountain that is shaped like a helmet (*Kabuto-yama*). There was a row of large western-style residences for missionaries on the northern edge of the campus, most of which have been converted to other uses by now. The Bascoms occupied one of those residences. Because our home was large, we enjoyed hosting Karen, Mark, and Zak (who celebrated his first birthday in Japan), Gary and Arlene Nachtigall, Gail, Spencer and Nyland Newell Judy and Vern Warkentin and other friends from North America. When I arrived in April, the house was actually partially occupied by the family of Imaizumi Nobu, his American wife Carol, and their two children. Imaizumi-sensei was the pastor of a Methodist church that had been founded by his parents. He was the headmaster of the kindergarten attached to the church where his mother and sister taught, and he taught part time at K.G.—among other things. He was later

appointed Chaplain at the new K.G. campus in Sanda. The Imaizumi family was staying in the Bascom house while their own home was being remodeled.

Besides making good progress on my writing projects, hosting guests and making new friends, several things stand out in my memory from our time in Japan in 1991, some pleasant, some not. On the positive side, the K.G. campus has many large old cherry trees, so the spring cherry blossom season on and around the campus was spectacular. We saw our first stunningly beautiful lotus blossoms on a small pond on the grounds of a temple up on the mountain above the campus. This was also a sad event, but we felt blessed to be able to attend the funeral of our old friend and pastor of the Ishibashi MB church, Arita Masaru-sensei, who had suffered a debilitating stroke several years earlier. It was an honor to join with many others in saying farewell to a man for whom we had great affection and respect.

On the not-so-positive side, I remember the extreme heat and humidity of the latter part of the summer in Japan in 1991. I had access to a small office on the campus that had a very noisy but still effective window air conditioning unit, so I would stay in the Bascom house until I could not stand the heat and humidity any longer and then I would flee to this small office with its clattering A.C. The Nachtigalls visited us at about this time and I remember them returning from their attempts to do some sightseeing, soaked with sweat and completely exhausted. There were good reasons for the missionaries and other foreigners heading for the high mountains of Nagano Prefecture during the hottest summer months. In fact, many things slow to a snail's pace—or stop altogether—in Japan during the hottest weeks in August.

I also found teaching in Japan again after 20 years of teaching in Fresno to be a frustrating experience. I had simply forgotten that the expectations were so different, so I became impatient when students loudly and rudely (or so it seemed to me) continued their small group conversations after I tried to begin the class session. I carry with me the vivid image of one student who regularly marched to the front of the classroom, sat down at a bench directly in front of me, conspicuously put his head down on the table in front of him, and promptly went to sleep for the hour. It took me too long to understand that many senior students routinely expected to disappear from class for weeks at a time while they travelled up and down Japan searching for jobs, only to return for the end of the semester fully expecting to receive credit for their work for the term. Of course it did not take me long to learn to accommodate them.

A memorable brief conversation with a freshman student at K.G. helped me to more fully understand how the club system worked on Japanese university campuses—and how that fit into the larger society beyond the campuses. I happened to ask the student if he belonged to a club, to which he answered that he was a member of the American football (as opposed to “soccer”) club. I asked what position he played. He said he did not know yet because his “seniors” (any one in a class higher than the student) had not decided yet. The student was of moderate size, so I suggested that maybe he would play in the backfield. Again, he said that he was just a freshman so he was busy taking care of the equipment and the grounds and that his “seniors” would decide later what position he would play. I asked him if he enjoyed playing American football, to which he replied that he did not really know since he had not actually played very much. So why did you join the American football club? I asked him. He said that eventually he wanted to work in a certain Japanese bank and there were many “connections” between that bank and graduates of the K.G. American football club, so that is why he joined that club. Japan really was a society of connections, connections, connections!

I also learned some new things about Christianity in Japan during our time at K.G. in 1991. I mentioned earlier that in the difficult post-WW II years in Japan, Christianity provided some Japanese people with a new understanding of how to live as autonomous, individual persons in a newly democratic society, and the church provided a new substitute community for the villages and extended families that they had lost with the collapse of the old Japanese State (*kokutai*) and the villages and towns they had left behind with the move from rural areas to the cities that happened in the post-war years. One of the ways in which Christian community was expressed in many Protestant churches in Japan was in sharing a simple lunch together after the Sunday morning worship service. These lunches were prepared by women (mostly) in the church and a fairly high proportion of the congregation stayed for “fellowship” over meals such as the Japanese version of curry rice or *chirashi-zushi*. We greatly appreciated this tradition in Japanese churches and often wondered why our suggestions that we do something like this in our congregations in California never seemed to get anywhere.

A conversation with an elderly medical doctor who attended the Mukogawa MB church helped me to understand something new about what the church in Japan had to offer as well as about the nature of the larger Japanese society. The Japanese MD began to attend the church after his adult daughter became a member. The daughter had been devastated and depressed when her husband, also an MD, was diagnosed with cancer (while they were studying in the U.S.) and died rather suddenly, leaving her as a young widow with two small children. She somehow connected with people in the Mukogawa

church and was so transformed by her experiences and relationships that her father decided to find out what the church was all about, so he would sometimes sit next to me and I would help him find his way through the hymnbook and Bible since he had no prior experience with the church at all. He was a rather stiff and formal Japanese gentleman from the old world.

One day we sat on the tatami floor mats in an upstairs room in the old Mukogawa church building, eating lunch together at a low Japanese table. Together with us at the table were the pastor's wife, one or two of their small children, and a high school student or two. Suddenly the elderly MD said something like the following:

You know, this is the only place in all of Japanese society where this kind of group would be eating together—men and women; children, young people and old people, Japanese people, and a foreigner, all eating together. There is no other place in Japanese society where this could happen.

This, I thought, is what the church at its best can be. In the words of the Apostle Paul, “In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female...” and in the words of an old hymn:

In Christ there is no east or west
In Him no south or north
But one great fellowship of love
Throughout the whole wide earth.

In most societies, including Japan and the U.S., it seems to be “natural” that people will be segregated into categories and groupings by religion, culture, social class, race, gender and age, but the church is one place where those boundaries can be transcended, though all too often they are not. It was gratifying to see this through the eyes of an elderly Japanese medical doctor who was brand new to the church. Unfortunately, the old generalization about churches in America is still too true: The most segregated time of the week is 11 o'clock Sunday morning.

FPU STUDENT STUDY TOURS: 1994 – 2001.

While we were still teaching at Osaka Shoin Women's College prior to 1970, we explored the possibility of taking a group of Shoin students to Fresno Pacific for a summer study program, but for a variety of reasons, those plans did not materialize. In 1971, the summer after I joined the Fresno Pacific faculty, my friend Takemoto-sensei brought a group of Shoin students to Fresno for a study tour, and

again, during the following two summers Shinoda-sensei and Sugito-sensei each brought groups of Shoin students to Fresno. The programs were not very satisfactory, since there were few American students on the campus and the hot Fresno summers are not at all enjoyable, so we did that program only three times. In 1991, shortly after Phil Hofer joined the Pacific faculty as director of international study programs, it occurred to us that it would make better sense for Japanese students to come in March, during their spring break between school years rather than during the summer, so we arranged for Fresno Pacific women students to host students from Osaka Shoin Women's College in their dorm rooms for a couple of weeks and we hired students and others to accompany the Shoin students on the usual tours around California—Yosemite, Giant Sequoias, San Francisco, Disneyland, etc. The program worked well enough that it continued until 2012. More than 200 Japanese students experienced American culture on the Pacific campus—and many Pacific students had their first direct, personal encounters with peers from another culture as they tried to communicate with their new friends from Japan (**Photo #34**).

In 1993 Shinoda-sensei sent me a letter proposing that we make the Shoin-Pacific program a true exchange relationship by bringing Pacific students to the Shoin campus for a study program in Japan. The Pacific curriculum at that time required students to complete a seven-unit “Focus Series” of courses organized around a theme, so I proposed that a Japan Study Program could be offered as one way to satisfy this requirement. Three of the units would be the “Introduction to Japanese Society” course that I had offered on the campus for many years, and then 30 days in Japan could be the equivalent of a second course, plus a one-unit paper reflecting on the student's experiences in Japan could complete the package. Requiring that the students take my course meant that they had at least some basic understanding of the broad outlines of Japanese history and culture before they arrived in Japan. The fact that some Pacific students had become friends with Shoin students who visited the Pacific campus provided an added incentive for Pacific students to participate in the program in Japan. The administration supported the idea not only with approval but with \$12,000 to reduce the cost of the program for our students. Financially, it was a really good deal for the students: 30 days in Japan plus four units of academic credit for about \$2000, so many of the students who opted for the program were shrewd business majors who recognized a bargain when they saw one. We left Fresno with the first group of students a few days after graduation in early May 1994, arriving during one of the most pleasant seasons in Japan, and we returned in early June, just as the heat and humidity of the rainy season approached.

I led the first group of students to Japan in 1994 as an “experiment.” Pacific paid Shoin \$500 per student, for which we received a classroom and access to the cafeteria and other facilities on the Shoin campus, and, most importantly, Shoin arranged “home stays” with Japanese families for our students. I stayed in the magnificent but largely neglected old Japanese mansion that had been the Mori family home in previous decades, but by then was used only for occasional group activities. (There were reports, believed by many, that the old mansion was also occupied by some ghosts—whom I never happened to meet. I was startled late one night, though, when I heard an outside door open and then footsteps coming down the long hallway in the old house. It proved to be the night watchman who had not been informed that I was staying in the house, so he came to check when he saw flickering light from the TV in my room. That was as close as I came to encountering the ghosts in the house.) The program consisted of some morning classroom sessions, most of which were preparation for field trips to local sites in the Osaka-Kobe-Nara-Kyoto area, often accompanied by Shoin faculty and/or students, plus seven days of “rail pass” travel (including on the “Bullet Train”) up and down Japan, from Nikko in the mountains north of Tokyo to Hiroshima and Miyajima in the west. The program was satisfying enough to people at both Pacific and Shoin that it was repeated in 1995, 1997, 1999, and, finally, 2001, one year after my retirement. Ruth or ESL faculty member Doreen Ewert joined the group for the 1997 and following programs, and other Pacific faculty and friends joined us for parts of some of the programs. We hoped that Doreen would keep the program going after our retirement, but, unfortunately for FPU, she moved to Indiana University so 2001 was the last time the program was offered. There was no longer anyone at FPU who had a personal relationship with anyone at Shoin, nor was there a member of the faculty had a special interest in Japan. A total of approximately 60 FPU students participated in the program while it lasted (**Photo #35**).

The program was very strenuous for me since I was responsible for almost everything, serving not only as professor and chief tour guide, but also surrogate parent, banker, priest, nurse, conflict mediator, etc. I lost five to ten pounds during each of the five 30 day tours, but it seemed to be worth it. Students, most of whom were from small towns in the San Joaquin Valley, were not only introduced in a direct and experiential way to Japanese culture, but also to life in a world-class city. It was fun to watch them transition in just a few days from being totally baffled by the complicated public transportation system to being comfortable enough to travel on their own almost anywhere in Japan they wanted to go. Fortunately, no one was ever seriously ill or seriously lost during our five study programs in Japan.

I will mention just two destinations that seemed to be particularly moving for many of our students. First, Koya-san is a complex of old Buddhist temple buildings high in the mountains south of Osaka, accessible by train and a steep cable car. The temple complex was founded in the ninth century by a Japanese Buddhist priest named Kobo Daishi, also known as Kukai, shortly after his return from a pilgrimage and Buddhist studies in China, so everything feels very, very old, including the huge cedar trees and rhododendron growing everywhere. The School of Buddhism that Kukai founded is known as Shingon, or “Esoteric,” Buddhism. One of the central features of the temple complex is a kilometer-long walking path through an ancient cemetery. The path is lined with giant cedar trees, rhododendron, and many stone grave markers of various ages and types, including some that are Shinto, even in this Buddhist cemetery complex. Graves in Japan are usually for groups such as extended families, corporations, military units, professional or trade associations, etc. since individuals do not usually merit their own grave sites, unless they were great and famous for something. Especially striking are the many small stone statues called *jizo* that are placed here and there in honor of aborted fetuses (Abortion is legal and wide-spread in Japan.) and babies who were stillborn or died in infancy. These small stone statues often wear a colorful knit cap, or an apron, and sometimes there is a small pinwheel stuck in the ground nearby. After these *jizo* have been neglected for a long enough period of time, cemetery workers collect them and deposit them together in what over the years become large mounds of these memorials for lost children. There were always at least some people respectfully burning incense or cleaning around the grave markers and sometimes we were able to hear Buddhist priests chanting scriptures in honor of persons who had passed away. The whole atmosphere was very esoteric and mysterious. There was one humorous (to us) stone marker, however. The tombstone was sponsored by the Pest Control Association of Japan and the inscription on the stone reads: *shiroari: yasurakani* (Termites: Rest in Peace).

There are also many symbolically carved stone columns standing here and there in the temple complex, some nearly ten feet tall. Many are covered with moss and are obviously very, very old. The columns are actually five or six separate carved stones stacked one on top of the other, each with a Sanskrit symbol indicating what the stone represents. The five stones are symbols of one understanding of the five basic elements of the natural world around us: earth, water, wind, fire, sky, and sometimes there is a sixth—mind. These ideas go back to Taoist teachings in ancient China, but, according to one interpretation, Kukai combined the stones in such a way as to convey a different meaning. According to this interpretation, when he was in China, Kukai came into contact with the Nestorian Christianity

that is said to have been introduced into China in the first century CE by St. Thomas, the disciple of Jesus. From these Chinese Christians, Kukai picked up the idea that there might be five different basic natural elements, but all were actually created by the one creator God. So Kukai's way of expressing this idea of one creator God was to combine the five elements in a single column. Neither I nor any of our undergraduate students was really interested in pursuing these esoteric ideas in any depth, but this was enough to indicate that things are really complicated: Taoism, Shingon Buddhism, Hindu Sanskrit, Nestorian Christianity, all represented in Japan in one stone column!

It was always interesting to see the effect that this place had on our college students from Fresno, who were often loud, full of energy, boisterous, sometimes borderline obnoxious—American style. As far as we can recall, in every single case the students became quiet and reflective after walking just a few meters along the path through the cemetery. Conversations became subdued and reflective. The effect on the students was quite amazing. A couple of students were very uneasy in the central temple at the top of the path, where priests were chanting, many people were lighting candles and incense, bowing in gestures of respect and offering silent prayers. These students felt that the atmosphere was “demonic” and they were eager to get outside, but only a few students had reactions anything like this. I often wonder how students remember their experiences on Koya-san by now, as many as 25 years later—or if they remember at all.

The Peace Park memorial to the victims of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima at the end of World War II was a second destination that seemed to have a sobering impact on almost all of our students. The memorial museum itself contains many artifacts, photos, videos, etc. representing the horrors of the bombing and its terrible aftermath. Of course this raised questions about *why* the U.S. dropped the first atomic bomb, without warning, on the center of this city that had few functioning military installations at the time, and none anywhere near the actual epicenter of the blast. The intended point, it seemed, was to demonstrate the destructive power of this grotesque new weapon on a civilian population that had been spared previous bomb attacks just so the power of the A-bomb would be clear for all to see—including the scientists who were not at all sure what might happen. Of the 320,000 residents of Hiroshima at the time of the blast, nearly 120,000 were killed instantly or died within a few days and another time that number died later of radiation-related afflictions.

Of course, deliberately bombing civilian populations was contrary to the “rules of war” as articulated in the Geneva Conventions, but that line had been crossed much earlier in WW II when Dresden and other German cities had been firebombed by the U.S. and our allies. By 1945 new and more destructive

napalm incendiary bombs had been developed so that large portions of Tokyo and 65 other Japanese cities had been turned to ashes, massive civilian casualties notwithstanding, so the deaths of another few hundred thousand Japanese civilians (mostly women, children and the elderly since the men were off making war) was not that big a deal. Many scientists, politicians, academics, and religious leaders bemoaned the fact that the U.S. had sunk to the same levels of immorality as our “enemies,” but those voices were ignored by the decision-makers, most of whom continued to argue to their dying day that they had done the right thing. But being confronted with images of the massive death and suffering that the A-bomb created raises all kinds of questions for anyone who visits the Peace Park.

But perhaps just as powerful are the impressions left by the many Japanese elementary, middle school, and high school student groups that turn their visits to the Peace Park into spiritual pilgrimages. Many of these groups of students, often traveling by train and bus on excursions from schools throughout Japan, arrive prepared for a ritual that typically involves standing in formation, singing a song, presenting collections of folded paper (*origami*) cranes, and offering prayers, spoken and silent, for peace in the world and for no more bombings like what happened in Hiroshima in August 1945. The last Pacific group to visit Japan had heard about this from friends who had been on previous programs, so our students worked diligently in advance to fold 1000 paper cranes to add to the collection in front of the memorial to Sadako, the young girl victim of the bombing who had tried to fold 1000 paper cranes in the hope that this would aid her in her recovery—but she died before she could complete her project. Pacific students added their 1000 paper cranes to the mounds of folded paper cranes contributed by thousands of students from throughout Japan—and around the world. The whole Peace Park experience seemed to have a strong effect on our students.

A humorous event happened when Ruth, Doreen and I told the group about our exciting plans to visit an outdoor hot spring bath (*onsen*) near the hotel where we were staying on Lake Uzenji high in the mountains above the Tokugawa family mausoleum in Nikko, north of Tokyo. When we explained that enjoying the steaming hot water in a Japanese hot spring meant bathing in the nude, the students, to a person, were appalled. They could not believe that faculty from a Christian college would suggest such an immoral thing. It did not even help when we explained that males and females bathe separately and that really shy people can use small (about 8” x 15”) towels to discretely cover their private areas. After a very long group conversation about cultural differences and various theological understandings of the nature of the human body, including the meaning of sexuality (“Some of our friends will have sex with their boyfriends but they will not get *naked!*”), one young woman decided to join us—and

then, finally, everyone except three students agreed to give it a try. (One young woman first wanted to know if it would be possible to use *three* small towels.) Ruth and Doreen and the students all reported that an amazing transformation took place. At first the young women (It seemed to be easier for the guys.) were extremely shy about everything—but after a few minutes, they were free to enjoy the experience, soaking in the steaming water, with wet towels on their heads, letting it all hang out. “When in Japan, do as the Japanese do.”

I faced one especially interesting situation myself when Shoin board chairman Mori passed away during one of our study programs in Japan. Ruth, Doreen and I had to move out of the old Mori family mansion where we were staying into a fine hotel so the “wake” could be held in the old family home. We were not invited to attend the memorial service itself but a few days after the funeral, two Shoin professor friends insisted that I should visit the new Mori family residence to express my condolences to Mr. Mori’s daughter and to pay my respects to his memory. I had great respect for Mr. Mori since he had hired Ruth and me thirty years before, in 1967, had been affirming and supportive of our work at Shoin, and had even visited us in Fresno. But I also knew that the forms in which I would be expected to express my respect would be based on Buddhist traditions and would be defined as “idol worship” by many of my missionary and Japanese pastor friends. But I did not see it that way. So I really had no problem in following the example of my professor friends in lighting a bit of incense and offering my own silent prayer of gratitude for the life of this good man. I was happy for the opportunity to report to his daughter that Mr. Mori had actually been one of the most important persons in my life since his decision to hire us at Shoin had substantially impacted the course of my life and the life of my family over a period of many decades. It was a very moving experience for me.

Spoken and written, formal and informal evaluations of these programs were almost uniformly very positive, and I always felt that these were the most powerful learning experiences I provided for any of my students, but, still, I often wonder about the long term effects. I wonder what students carry with them from these Japan experiences now, 20 years later for some. I cannot really know, but what I do know is that nearly all of the Pacific students with whom I still have contact (e.g. via *Facebook*) are students who were participants in the Japan Study Program. At least some of the bonding that happened seemed to have long-term carrying power. I can only wonder about the rest.

I did recently have occasion to converse briefly with one former student, a middle-aged woman now, about her reflections on her experiences in Japan 20 years ago. I asked her if she ever thinks about her experiences in Japan these days. “I still think about it often.” she said. “It was life-changing for me,”

“I have heard other people say that,” I replied. “But what do you mean when you say ‘life-changing’? How, specifically, did being in Japan change your life?” Her reply: “I started to ask questions. I learned to ask questions that I never would have thought of asking if I had not gone to Japan.” So, if this kind of expanded personal and social awareness is one part of what it means to live a good life, I suppose the Japan Study Program made at least some contribution toward that end.

VOLUNTEER YEARS IN JAPAN: 2002-2005.

One of the reasons that Ruth and I retired when we did was so that we might still have the health and energy to engage in some sort of voluntary service somewhere in the world. During the first year of our retirement, we explored various options, starting with the Mennonite Central Committee, for service in another country. MCC, rightly in our opinion, had two requirements for the kinds of administrative positions that we were looking for that we did not feel prepared to accept. First, they wanted a commitment of five or six years, longer than we had in mind at ages 65 and 66. Plus, they wanted their administrators to learn the local language. Nothing seemed to be available at the time in English-speaking countries, and, after going through what it took to become even somewhat communicative in the Japanese language, we did not feel that we could commit ourselves to learning another language like Russian or Vietnamese at our ages. So, we thought, perhaps there might be something that we could do in Japan, since we already knew something about living and communicating in that country; we still had relationships with many people there; and we carried with us many happy memories of previous experiences in Japan. Mennonite agencies such as MCC and the Mennonite Economic Development Agency (MEDA) did not have workers in Japan, so we finally decided to contact our friends in the Japan Mennonite Brethren Conference to see if they had anything for us to do. We suggested that we would be happy to serve at our own expense if someone could help us with housing, and we suggested a one year “experiment” since we did not know how things might go. After a series of exchanges with various people in the JMBC, we received an offer from Pastors Abe and Etoh to teach English in the Kawachi-Nagano and Sakai Chuo MB churches, both in the southern part of the Osaka area, which we accepted.

We did not know Etoh-sensei very well, but we felt that we had good relationships with Abe-sensei and his wife since our early years in Japan when he was in some of my English classes and they served as caretakers in the Nosegawa Camp where we also spent time doing English camps and other things. The churches provided an almost-new retirement house that was owned by the Abes in Iwade-cho, a suburb of Wakayama City just south of the larger Osaka metropolitan area. The Abes also provided

us with a small car to use to commute east and north about one hour to the Kawachi-Nagano church and their small “branch church” in the nearby city of Hashimoto and another hour west and north of our residence to the church in Sakai and their small branch church. We shared approximately one full time teaching load between the two of us, meaning that we spent one day teaching classes in one of the churches, another day in the other, plus other meetings on other days, and we attended the two churches on alternating Sundays.

Our living situation was very interesting and comfortable. The Abe house was in a fairly new housing development near an old village, right on the edge of farmland. In fact, there was only one house between us and rice paddies and other typical small-scale Japanese-style farming operations, which we greatly enjoyed watching as the seasons changed. Just up the hill was an old Shinto shrine, a large Buddhist temple complex that was famous for its cherry blossoms in the spring and brilliantly colored maples in the fall, and a large arboretum. Just down the hill was a restaurant where we enjoyed eating *tonkatsu*, a Japanese version of pork cutlets, a small coffee shop called *Bean*, and even a small church that was led by a missionary from England and his Japanese wife. The neighborhood medical doctor happened to be the organist in a nearby Baptist church. The houses in our immediate neighborhood were mostly occupied by families with young children. We became somewhat acquainted with a few of our nearby neighbors, but, as is usual in Japan, we did not establish significant relationships with the people in our neighborhood. That almost always takes a long time and we were not there long enough. Plus, our church life was split between two churches each one hour away, so it did not seem to make much sense for us to try to introduce our neighbors to our churches.

Our classes were small, sometimes with only one or two persons present, but we did meet some very interesting people. Mr. and Mrs. Mihara, for example, owned a small shop that fabricated custom cabinets for homes. They had no children, so they had time and money to enjoy jazz, to travel around Japan in their Honda convertible sports car, and to join our afternoon English classes. One very bright and attractive young wife told us more than she should have about the problems she was having with her husband, who was usually too exhausted from work to do anything at home other than sleep. Another woman was the wife of a traditional Japanese tatami floor mat maker. She was one of the very few Japanese persons we ever met who was a devout Buddhist. (Shoin linguistics professor Sugito-sensei was another.) She and a group of her friends periodically travelled to Sri Lanka where they helped to support an orphanage. Two women in another class were active in an organization that offered hospitality to foreigners who visited their city. One of two very bright sisters in one of our

classes was a student in Kyoto University, one of the most prestigious schools in all of Japan (**Photo #36**).

The members in the two churches that we attended welcomed us very warmly, and in these churches, too, we met some very interesting and wonderful Christian people. Mr. Kawamura, for example, was the chief financial officer for a large chain of supermarkets, but what he really wanted to do was study theology, so after his retirement, he attended theology classes at Kwansei Gakuin University from which he had graduated many years before. He was especially interested in the writings of Paul Tillich, even while he was the treasurer for their MB congregation. Some of the women in one of the churches did sign language, so they would “sign” the worship services, whether anyone really needed this service or not. We very much enjoyed our “fellowship” with these and others like them, especially over the simple lunch that is typically served most Sundays after the worship services in many Japanese churches.

As the end of our one year commitment approached, we began to evaluate how we felt our experiment was going. On the one hand, we really enjoyed living in the house in Iwade-cho. We were spending time with very interesting people in our classes and in the churches and we were probably providing them with some degree of service that many seemed to genuinely appreciate. We enjoyed our walks up the mountain behind our residence and our drives through the countryside, especially to Hashimoto and Kawachi-Nagano where we used a road that took us through farming country. We had the time, energy, and facilities to host a number of family and friends from the U.S., which we enjoyed very much

But on the other hand, we were supposed to be contributing to the development of “branch churches” that did not really seem to be going anywhere, and that approach has since been abandoned. We were spending a lot of time driving back and forth between our home and our classes and churches, and we were wondering if it was really worthwhile, since the classes were so small. Sometimes only one or two persons would show up. We were feeling like our activities were stretched quite thin and we were away from our “real” lives back in Fresno, so we were thinking that it was probably not worth it for us nor to anyone else to continue on for another year.

Just as our thoughts were moving in this direction, we received a surprise visit from committee member Abe-sensei and Tokumoto-sensei, the chair of the JMBC Evangelism Committee, with an invitation that came as a great shock to us. They reported that there were big problems in one of the five MB congregations in the Nagoya area, located about one third of the way between Osaka and Tokyo. The

Komaki Hope Chapel (KHC) was located in Tokadai, a “new town” development in the city of Komaki, a suburb on the northern edge of Nagoya. The church had been planted by an MB missionary family some twelve years before. Due to a series of circumstances, three missionary couples had served for relatively brief periods of time until about eight years previously when a Japanese pastor had finally assumed responsibility for the still small congregation of about 15 people. The denominational leaders knew that the church was not growing, but they had only recently discovered that the problems were much more serious than just that. They had discovered that the pastor was sending false financial statements that hid the fact that he had taken some \$50,000 from a church building fund. Not only that, but the pastor’s wife was apparently leading a kind of double life, spending many nights and days away from her husband and children. The church people had some idea of what was happening, but, of course, they did not report the bad news to the denominational leaders in Osaka. They just stopped attending the church. When the denominational leaders finally learned what was going on, they confronted the pastor and his wife. He resigned and she filed for divorce to terminate their marriage. She no longer had any interest in being a pastor’s wife. Everything had pretty much fallen apart in the Komaki Hope Chapel.

The request that pastors Abe and Tokumoto brought to us was that we should go to Komaki to provide a hospitable “presence” while the people in the congregation decided if they wanted to try to regroup and continue as a congregation or not. Meanwhile, the denomination also needed to decide if they wanted to continue to subsidize this church plant project since the denomination had been paying the rent for the house in which the pastor and his family had been living plus providing salary support for the pastor and his family. It had been an expensive investment with little visible return. So both the people in the KHC and the leaders of the denomination had some difficult decisions to make. They wanted us to move into the house in Komaki and keep things going while decisions were being processed.

Our initial response to this unexpected invitation was to think that it must be some kind of joke. Why would they ask us to do something like this? This was not a task for foreigners with no pastoral experience in Japan or anywhere else. Surely there must be a retired Japanese pastor or *someone* who was more qualified than we. Not only were we without pastoral experience, but this disastrous situation in Komaki especially called for someone with far more experience and wisdom than we possessed. Our Japanese was not very good; my hearing was deteriorating; we knew nothing about the Nagoya area; we were thinking of returning to Fresno in a few months; we had never been very successful in

bringing new people into the church; etc. etc. Our list of reasons for thinking that their request made no sense at all was quite long. But they explained that they really did not have anyone else who was available to go to Komaki and they did not expect us to resolve any of the problems, nor did they expect us to invite new people to join the church. They mainly wanted us to move into the rented house, to be friendly and hospitable, and to maintain Sunday worship services while others worked on the big issues related to the future of the project. My Japanese was good enough, they said, for me to do about three sermons each month and they would send a Japanese pastor to take care of the other Sundays. We were exactly the right people for this temporary assignment, they assured us, because we knew how to be friendly and hospitable. We would be free to terminate any time we felt inclined to do so.

Of course we asked for some time to think about this, to solicit advice from friends and acquaintances, and to check with our families at home. We first contacted Laurence and Leona Hiebert, our fellow MB missionary friends in the Nagoya area who had some familiarity with the situation in Komaki. So we drove from Osaka up to Komaki one day to meet the Hieberts in the modern shopping center within easy walking distance of the rented residence. We drove past the house and visited with the Hieberts over lunch in the nearby shopping center. We learned that a couple who were members of the KHC lived one house away from the residence and another church couple lived about 100 yards away. The living and shopping situation actually looked very comfortable and attractive. When we asked senior MB missionary acquaintances who had served in the church, their responses were uniformly positive. “The icing on the cake” of their many years of ministry in Japan, some said. By that time we were interested enough in the invitation that we made arrangements to meet the church people. We wanted to know whether the few people in the church had any interest in what was being proposed and we wanted to get a feeling for what the real situation might be, so we spent a weekend in Komaki, enjoying dinner together with the church group Saturday evening and attending their worship service Sunday morning.

We had heard that Nagoya people had a reputation for being somewhat aloof and difficult to learn to know, so we were completely overwhelmed by the warm reception we received. Of course they had had foreign pastoral leadership previously, so they were accustomed to relating to *gaijin* (foreigners) like us, but, still, their warm welcome was a surprise, and it seemed to be very genuine. One of the women even put her hand on Ruth’s arm as we walked together along the street—a physical gesture of affection that was rare indeed in Japan in those days. By the time of our visit, the church folks were assuming that it was a done deal and that we would be coming to join them. After our visit, it was easy

for us to decide to move to Komaki after we completed our commitments in Osaka and returned to the U.S. for a short summer visit.

We moved our things the 100 miles or so from Wakayama Prefecture to Komaki in Abe-sensei's Mitsubishi van, which looked large in the Japanese context but seems to be really small when we see similar vehicles on the street here. We found the house a real mess. The previous pastor had been caring for himself and his children since his wife left, so housekeeping had not been a high priority in his difficult life. Ruth spent hours just cleaning the apartment size stove. We learned very quickly that there was a very large "recycle shop" (a thrift store that had the name *Kimbels* for some reason) not too far away, so we spent many hours (and very little money) and had a lot of fun turning the house into a home that would also be a place of hospitality for church members and others. We also learned quickly enough that we could walk from our house to the *Apita* shopping mall in about four minutes. The "Toukadai New Town" was a planned community with a mixture of types of housing ranging from a luxury high-rise condominium complex to cheap apartments (many of which were rented by Portuguese-speaking Brazilian laborers) with many modest, middle-class residences like ours in between. A complex of walking and biking paths provided a wonderful place for us to get exercise and observe life in Japan. *Toukadai* means something like "Peach Blossom Heights" because there were many peach orchards in the surrounding area. It was a convenient and charming place to live.

Our initial positive impressions of the people in the church were more than confirmed as we learned to know them more personally. Mr. and Mrs. Inoue lived two houses north of our residence. They were the senior lay leaders in the group, so it was very convenient to be able to walk almost next door when we had questions, either about the church or about life in the neighborhood. Mr. and Mrs. Mori lived about 100 yards away. He was very busy in his roles as president of three small companies, all having to do with software programs for architects, but she was always warm and helpful to us. Kobayashi Junko-san had grown up in an MB church in the Osaka area but she and her husband and two pre-teen sons had been active in the KHC for many years. Kimura Naomi-san was a member of a Baptist church far away in Kyushu but she had been a part of the KHC group for many years, and she had brought her friend and fellow engineer at Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, Sano Michiko-san, to join her in the KHC. A few others were also part of the group. All (except the two Kobayashi boys) were mature, thoughtful, professional adults who had known each other for a long time.

Our main assignment in Komaki was to maintain a regular schedule of Sunday morning worship services, almost always in a rented room in the nearby branch of the Komaki city hall. If we were

“bumped” from the room for some reason, we would meet in our house, which was a ten minute walk from the usual meeting place. Worship services were pretty much the same as is typical in Protestant churches in many places in the world whether the group is large or small: hymns, Bible readings, prayers, sermon, offering, announcements. We would select hymns, texts, and sermon titles, and the Inoues would prepare a simple “bulletin” to distribute to the dozen or so people who regularly attended. Sano-san usually played her small electronic organ that she brought with her, and we transported the small collection of Japanese Bibles, hymnals and songbooks that we stored in our house. Mr. Inoue often played guitar accompaniment for more contemporary gospel and folk type songs that we sang along with the more traditional hymns from the Japanese hymnal (*sambika*) that was used in most evangelical churches in Japan. People often stayed for an informal time of snacks and tea or coffee after the worship service. The members seemed to enjoy being together, and it did not take long for us to begin to enjoy being with them, too.

Preaching sermons in Japanese almost weekly proved to be a most interesting challenge for me. My first plan was that I would write my sermons on the computer in English and then I would use an English-to-Japanese translation program on my computer to change my sermon into Japanese. But this proved to be mostly frustrating and disappointing. For example, I remember one instance where the translation program used the month of May (*gogatsu*) instead of the “may” that I had intended. The computer translations made no sense. For a while I tried to write my sermons in Japanese using our Roman alphabet, but that seemed to be very unnatural and unsatisfying, so I finally decided to try writing in Japanese directly from a brief English outline and then I asked someone to correct my Japanese. Nakajima-sensei, the young pastor of the MB church in Kuwana about one hour away, agreed to meet with me weekly to go over what I had written. His English was very good since he had lived in Oregon for several years and he was very helpful—but meeting with him meant that each week we needed to drive about one hour each way, so it took nearly one half day to have a few pages of text corrected. That became old rather quickly. Besides, I thought I was getting the hang of it, so after a few months I asked KHC member Kobayashi Junko-san if she would be willing to help me. From then on I sent my Japanese manuscript to Kobayashi-san early in the week as an email attachment and she sent it back with her corrections. This proved to be enormously helpful. I do not know whether she became more casual about offering suggestions, or if my Japanese was getting better (probably some of each), but by the end she was offering just a few corrections on each page. I never gained enough fluency in Japanese that I could present my sermon without reading from my manuscript. Mori-san

repeatedly encouraged me to try (because he seemed to be frustrated with my reading from my text) but I just could not do it.

Perhaps I should explain briefly what is involved in writing Japanese on a computer. There are different ways to do this, but I started with our Roman alphabet. Suppose I wanted to write *Nihon*, one of several words for Japan. I would type “n” and then “i” and then hit “Enter” because I was pretty sure that “ni” was the first syllable in a compound word. (Note: Almost all syllables in Japanese are either just a vowel as in “a-o-i” a word for blue, or a combination consonant plus vowel, “ni” in this case, or to cite more familiar examples, “ka-wa-sa-ki,” “mi-tsu-bi-shi,” “ma-tsu-shi-ta,” “to-yo-ta.”) On the screen would appear all of the Chinese characters (kanji) that can be read as “ni.” For example, “ni” can be the number “two” or it can mean “sun”—or a list of several other meanings. I would scroll down the list to the character for “sun,” because I already knew (or hoped I knew) that the first part of *Nihon* is “sun” and then I would hit “Enter” to insert that character into my manuscript. Then I would type “h” and “o” and “n” (twice for n—but I will not bother to explain why) and then hit “Enter.” Again, all of the characters that can be pronounced *hon* would appear and I would scroll down to the one that means “source of” and enter that—because I already knew that was the correct *kanji* to combine with “ni” to form a term for Japan: “*Nihon*, the land of the rising sun.” Now I had written one two-character word, *Nihon*, for Japan. Needless to say, writing a sermon in Japanese was a slow and laborious process, even after I had decided on the content. But it became easier and faster with practice and I found it to be a challenging, interesting and even fun adventure. I do not think there could be a better way to stave off the onset of dementia.

It was really gratifying to discover one day while preparing a sermon that I had gained enough proficiency in the Japanese language that it was more effective for me to use a Japanese language dictionary to check on meanings than a Japanese-English dictionary. Using the Japanese-Japanese dictionary provided me with more accurate definitions than reading definitions in English, plus, this helped me to further expand my vocabulary, though my Japanese language abilities never reached a level where I could consider myself to be “fluent.” But I was making progress.

Of course there was more to providing pastoral leadership than just making sure there was a worship service each Sunday morning. We did not want to initiate a whole bunch of changes too quickly, but in keeping with a practice that is common in many Protestant churches in Japan, we encouraged the church people to gather in our home for lunch after the service instead of just having snacks in our room in the city building, since we lived just a few minutes away. So this is what happened. Sometimes

people would stop in at the supermarket in the Apita shopping mall and buy a simple packaged lunch, like sushi or sandwiches. Sometimes they would bring things from home that we would all share, potluck style (*mochiyori* it is called in Japanese). Fairly early on we began a tradition of offering an “Enns Lunch” prepared by us (by Ruth, mostly) one Sunday each month. Sometimes these were simple meals, but sometimes we offered foods that were fairly exotic in Japan, such as a version of Mexican tacos. We did a fairly typical Thanksgiving Dinner, complete with turkey, something that few Japanese people had ever eaten. We tried a couple of meals of traditional Mennonite foods like *borscht*, and *verenika* and a version of German sausage. Meals like this also provided occasions for simple lessons in Mennonite history. Of course conversations (almost all in Japanese) flowed freely around our table since these people had known each other for a long time and seemed to be very comfortable with one another, whether we were present or not. We tried to follow along as best as we could, but sometimes the conversation moved too fast for us to keep up with our still limited Japanese, so we just sat there “in the dark.” We did not mind and they did not seem to mind either if we were out of it from time to time.

We did try a few other innovations. Few Japanese Protestant churches that we knew about observed Advent or Lent, so we tried to introduce the basic ideas of these important seasons in the traditional Christian year. We introduced the idea of banners, a wreath and candles during the Advent season (**Photo #37**) and we did a version of “flowering the cross” on Easter morning. Since the KHC had no structured program of Christian Education for the two Kobayashi boys or for the adults, Ruth often took the kids to our house for some simple lessons, and for a time we re-arranged the morning schedule so there was a brief study time for adults. Since the group was trying to make decisions about their future, we worked our way through a brief Japanese-language history of the MB church that missionary Harry Friesen had done once upon a time. For this same reason we also made arrangements to visit the worship services (and following fellowship) of other MB churches in the Nagoya area, since they had little contact with each other—and we visited a large Pentecostal-type church in our neighborhood so the KHC members would have some idea of what their options might be if they decided not to continue as an MB congregation. They did not feel comfortable with the Pentecostals. We also added a Saturday morning English language Bible Study group that several of the members attended, and some people who were not yet part of the church group also joined in.

Another English class grew out of a “chance” conversation with a man while waiting in a line in an outdoor farmers’ market near our home. Mr. Hada was retired from a position in an agricultural

cooperative. He introduced himself and asked us (in English) who we were. He had once visited the U.S. on a business trip, so he could communicate somewhat in English. He asked if we would be willing to help him improve his English, to which we replied that we would prefer teaching a group if he could round up a few others who had interests similar to his. The result was a gathering of about a half dozen delightful adult people from our local area with whom we engaged in weekly conversation (in English, mostly) during most of the 19 months that we were in Komaki. Sometimes we went on field trips to visit local points of interest that they wanted us to see. Most of these people attended church activities from time to time and most of them also visited us here in Fresno after our return. They greatly enriched our lives during our stay in Komaki and after (**Photo #38**).

The folks in the KHC group decided that they did want to regroup and try to continue to develop as a congregation, so some representatives from the JMBC leadership in Osaka came to Komaki to explain the position of the denomination. The denomination was willing to continue to provide financial support and would try to send another Japanese pastor, but that was difficult because the supply of pastors was very limited. The denomination did stipulate one condition, however, and that was that the people who were long-time participants in the KHC should become formal members. To our surprise, this worked out OK. A couple of people transferred their membership from other churches, Sano-san received baptism, and some others explained the good reasons (having to do with family relationships) why they were not prepared to become members at that time. The KHC was again on track to become a regular part of the MB denomination in Japan.

Ruth and I participated in two rather unusual (for us) events during our sojourn in Komaki. First, Miss Mori from the KHC asked me to officiate at her wedding, something that I had done only a couple of times in Fresno—but this was in a commercial “wedding chapel” in Japan. This involved putting together, with help from staff at the chapel, the Inoues, and others, a ceremony that would last exactly 30 minutes—because this was the total amount of time (including entrance and exit of guests) allotted for each ceremony. We thought that the “lighting of the unity candle” that was common in American weddings at that time might fit the Japanese situation, so we explained it to the couple and they seemed to be genuinely interested, so we incorporated that into the service—maybe the first (and only?) time this was done in Japan, as far as we know. Everything seemed to go well enough and the couple is still married with two children, so I guess that project was a success.

Second, Sano Michiko-san asked me to baptize her, something that I had never done before, except for a practice run in a baptistery when I was a seminary student at Fuller. Again, after some consultations,

I agreed to do this. Since the KHC had no facilities for a baptism and no one was interested in an outdoor baptism in a river or lake during the cold month of February, we all traveled to the nearby Wago MB church where they had a small baptistery hidden under the floor of the stage in their sanctuary. Actually, it was a small, metal bathtub. Sano-san and I talked about the mechanics of immersion in the Japanese tub—which seemed to be long enough to accomplish the task, though Sano-san was on the tall side for a Japanese woman. I asked her to face to my left so that I could support her with my stronger right hand under her back, but, alas! The faucet and handles stuck out so far that it was impossible for me to lower her into the water at that angle. So one of the Wago church people then informed us that it was impossible to do what I was attempting. We had to turn Sano-san around so that her feet, not her head, were on the faucet end of the tub. So we switched ends and then everything worked out perfectly fine. This might help make the case that other modes of baptism might make better sense than immersion, but everyone seemed to have a good time and Sano-san is still playing the organ during worship services in the Komaki Hope Chapel, so I guess my one and only baptism was also a success.

At some point during the winter of 2005 we began to think that about 18 months of the very temporary arrangements under which we living and working in Komaki might be long enough. We were enjoying what we were doing and were only receiving signals of affirmation and appreciation, but we were also increasingly aware that we were not a long-term solution to the needs of the KHC. If no Japanese pastoral leadership was available anywhere in the foreseeable future, then everyone needed to acknowledge that and make plans accordingly. If someone was available to replace us, April 1 would be a good time for that to happen since that seems to be the date when fiscal years and school years and most every institution in Japan begins its new year. It just happened that Abe-sensei was having conversations with his congregation in Kawachi-Nagano about a date for his retirement—which had been fixed at March 31, 2005, so he was available and willing to replace us in Komaki on April 1. We returned to Fresno a few days after the Abes were installed as pastors of the KHC on the first Sunday in April.

I will conclude with some events that happened in the KHC shortly before and then after we returned to California because they illustrate some of the complexities in establishing a Christian church in Japan. In November 2004, we arranged to have a special lecture sponsored by the KHC. Many Japanese churches sponsor such lectures and concerts, both as a service to their neighborhoods and as a way of making contact with new people who might be interested in what the church has to offer.

Flyers are distributed, either door to door by the church members, which takes a lot of time, or as inserts in the newspaper, which is fairly expensive. Either way, the rate of response is not usually very good. A rule of thumb, we were told, is that one new person might be expected to visit the church for the concert or lecture for every 10,000 flyers that are distributed. But we thought we might do a bit better than that, since our guest lecturer was Dr. Tetsuo Kashiwagi, our old friend from Ishibashi days, who had become a kind of celebrity as founder of the hospice movement in Japan; as the author of many books; as a regular columnist in major Japanese newspapers; and as recently appointed president of Kinjou University in nearby Nagoya. Dr. Kashiwagi's schedule was always very full, but he agreed to lecture for the KHC, perhaps as a favor to us—or perhaps as a way to repay some *on* that he still felt from many years earlier when we had helped him and Michiko-san prepare for his medical studies in St. Louis. The lecture was in a large public hall and was a great success, with nearly 200 people present.

A few Sundays before the lecture, a middle aged couple who lived in our neighborhood arrived to visit the worship service at KHC. Mr. Takeda had been an executive with a part of IBM that had been acquired by the Toyota Motor Company, so he was then an executive with Toyota. They had spent time in the Los Angeles area where their children had attended a school sponsored by a Lutheran church, so they had some familiarity with things Christian. Their son, then a university student, had become a Christian through the influence of KGK, the Japanese version of IVCF, and had recently been baptized in a Christian church in another city and he was encouraging his parents to establish some connection with a church. They were just considering what to do when they received a flyer announcing Dr. Kashiwagi's lecture. They were familiar with him and his books and newspaper articles, so they decided that any church that he would lecture for might be OK, so they showed up at KHC to check us out. They rarely missed a worship service or other church activity during the final months of our time in Komaki.

A couple of rather dramatic things happened during the months after we left Komaki. First, there was a baptism. Mrs. Mori finally felt free to receive baptism since her mother had recently passed away. Mrs. Mori had been hesitant to receive baptism while her non-Christian mother was still living. And Mr. and Mrs. Takeda were baptized. Pastor Abe performed the baptism. We have a photo of the group that gathered by a river for the baptism ceremony. The Takedas, the Moris, numerous family members and friends, and the church people are among the 25 people in the photo—one of the largest KHC gatherings ever. And, second, the group decided to build their own facility. We had started to search for an appropriate property while we were still in Komaki, thinking that the most reasonable thing to

do might be to buy an existing building (maybe a closed coffee shop or café or some other closed small business with some parking spaces attached) and remodel it to provide living space for the pastor and gathering space for church meetings. But we could not find an appropriate property, so after we left, the group finally decided to purchase a vacant lot and construct their own very fine new building—with parking spaces attached. The new KHC building is located near enough to a major road to be clearly visible, but not so near that traffic noise is a problem. It has a steeple, cross and other architectural features so that it is immediately recognizable as a church, as clearly in Japan as it would be in North America. A sanctuary that seats about 55, plus an entry way (*genkan*), a small kitchen, and restrooms are on the ground floor. The pastor's residence is on the second floor. The whole thing is very nicely designed and is very attractive. We returned to Japan to attend the dedication ceremony in November 2006.

But before the building was completed, we heard that the Takedas had stopped attending the church. In a letter to us, they explained that they had found an orphanage in a neighboring city that had worship services for the children and staff and others and they felt called to help with this project. While we were in Komaki for the dedication of the new building, the Takedas reappeared and participated as if they had never left, but they disappeared again after we returned to Fresno. We continued to correspond with them via email. They later spent time in Africa as volunteers, teaching computer technology. And then a few months later, we heard that the Moris had also stopped attending the KHC. We have never heard what their reasons might be for dropping out of a group in which they had participated for almost 15 years and had invested a lot of time and money in the building project.

A third problem happened more recently. Pastor Abe was ready to retire a second time, so in 2011 the JMBC sent a young man, recently graduated from the seminary in Ishibashi, to serve as pastor in Komaki. But after just one year he was asked to leave, apparently by both the KHC people and the denominational leaders because he did not know how to relate to people, we were told. Fortunately, in our opinion, Fuwa-sensei, another recently retired pastor whom we have known and respected for many years, moved to Komaki in March 2012 to assume yet another interim pastorate in the KHC. The JMBC informed the group in Komaki that the Conference would continue financial support through 2016 but after that the KHC would be on their own, so they would have another difficult decision to make. It seems to be really hard to establish a church in Japan, but, according to recent reports from Japan, the KHC has been recognized by the JMBC as one of their autonomous congregations.

Our connection with Japan did not really end with our return to Fresno in 2005. During the years since our return, we hosted 26 friends from Japan here in our condo. Most of these visits were for several days to one week in length and they typically included visits to our church and tours of Fresno, Reedley, and the other famous local sightseeing destinations in this area, such as the Giant Sequoias, Yosemite National Park and the Central California Coast. I have also spent considerable time editing papers for Japanese students in the seminary here in Fresno.

I can think of several reasons why we enjoyed offering hospitality to our friends from Japan. For one thing, they were our friends, so we enjoyed having the opportunity to share our lives in Fresno in somewhat the same way they had shared their lives with us in Japan. Second, who could ever tire of seeing places like Yosemite and Kings Canyon National Parks? Seeing these and other familiar places through the eyes of “strangers” always provides new and fresh perspectives. Similarly, reading the theological papers and projects of seminary students from Japan contributed a lot to my own theological (re)education, particularly since the papers often represented perspectives that were uniquely Japanese. And, finally, I think that hosting and assisting people here provided us with a means to repay some of the debt of gratitude that we felt to these friends to whom we owed so much for their hospitality to us during our years in their country. I have mentioned that the sense of obligation to reciprocate a favor received (*on*) is a very important component of Japanese culture and we could not have spent all those years in Japan without picking up at least a little bit of this part of the culture. I do think that one reason we really enjoyed hosting our friends from Japan had to do with alleviating the feeling of obligation to repay the many favors we had received from them.

By the end of 2015 we were quite sure that our direct connections with Japan had come to an end. Ten years had passed since we last lived in Japan and the number of persons with whom we were still in communication continued to dwindle. It was time to move on to other things. But in May, 2016, over lunch with two visiting Japanese MB pastors, they asked if I would be willing to write a history of the MB mission in Japan. My first response was to say that it would be completely impossible for me to say anything at all about the Japanese church side of the story, but MB mission records were in the archives at FPU, so writing about the *mission* might be a possibility. I asked what *kind* of history they wanted: a celebration of all of the good things that had happened, or a sociological analysis, which might, as Peter Berger said many years ago, focus on the “unrespectable,” “underside” of mission work in Japan. More like sociology than just a celebration of the good parts of the story, they replied. And how long did they expect the report to be? A few pages, like an article, a pamphlet, or a brochure, or

more like a book? More like a book, they responded. Another pastor told me later that for the Japanese pastors, the mission was like a “black box.” They wanted me to help them understand what was going on inside that “black box.”

I had no idea what kinds of records from the MB mission in Japan might be stored in the archives at FPU, but a quick check indicated that there were many well-organized boxes filled with folders, each with a collection of old correspondence, minutes, reports, budgets, etc. Many of the old records are difficult to read because they are carbon copies written on thin, old onion-skin paper, or the old blue aerogram airmail forms that were the cheapest means to correspond across the Pacific in those days before inexpensive telephone service, and long before anyone could even imagine communicating electronically. Because the amount of available material is so massive, I decided to limit my research to the early years of the mission, the first 20 years or so, when the original team of MB missionaries was still exercising strong leadership and before the Japan MB Conference began to take significant actions on its own initiative. Their request that I complete my report by the end of 2017 provided another parameter within which I should work. So I began my project by researching the historical backgrounds of the MB mission in Japan: a brief review of the history of missions, including the origins of Anabaptist-Mennonite mission activities and changes that had happened down through the years. I then wrote reviews of several early developments in the history of the MB mission in Japan. In the course of the many hours that I have spent searching through these old records, I have learned many things about which I had no clue, even though we were present in Japan during some of those early years. Some of my surprises have been pleasant but others I would just as soon not know about. But it has all been interesting, and, for the most part, enjoyable. I am grateful for the invitation that sent me off on this final big research and writing project, though I do wonder who will be interested in reading a 300 page report on what happened in the MB mission in Japan many years ago. The translation into Japanese, done by Dr. Minamino Hironori, was published in March 2020 under the Japanese title *Hokubei MB ni yoru Nihon senkyou—sono rekishi to hyouka*. The English title is *Mennonite Brethren Mission History in Japan*. Dr. Robert Lee and I are listed as authors. A report that Dr. Lee submitted to the MB mission board in 1995 is included in the publication. The book is available online, as is a longer English version of my part of the book. The title is *Christian Gospel and Earthen Vessels: The Mennonite Brethren Mission in Japan: The Early Years*.

While I was busily working on this project, we were pleasantly surprised and pleased beyond words when, during the fall of 2016, the Japanese MB pastors invited Ruth and me to attend their pastors’

retreat in June, 2017, to present some of my findings. After an initial positive response, several experiences caused us to reconsider. During a trip to visit friends at Goldensun in Phoenix, Arizona, we realized just how limited Ruth's mobility was at that time. Getting up from low chairs, sofas, beds, toilets, etc. was difficult for her, as was going down stairs, and getting in and out of cars. A couple of experiences of trying to understand some Japanese language speakers made me very much aware of how limited my ability to understand and communicate in Japanese had become. This was partly because of progressive hearing loss (I was having difficulty understanding English, too.), and partly because we had not used the language for more than ten years. We could only imagine mostly frustrating experiences for us, inconveniences for our hosts, and we were sure that our ability to contribute would be minimal, so with regrets we declined this very gracious invitation to return to Japan one more time. I sent my report in writing and we will be content with the many fond memories that remain with us from our many years of experiences in Japan. We did not want to spoil things with a negative last trip to Japan.

JAPAN: SOME REFLECTIONS

Before I offer some further general observations and reflections about Japanese culture and society, I think I need to express some reservations and equivocations. First, we experienced Japan only as *gaijin*, which is literally "outside persons," not as native insiders, so, even though I have made considerable effort to understand Japanese culture, it has always been as an observer, looking on from a distance, never as one who actually lived the culture from the "inside." Maybe I got as far as being in the *genkan* (entry-way) of the Japanese house, but I was certainly never really part of the family. My perspective on Japanese culture has always been something like that of a male gynecologist, I (tastelessly) told my students. A male gynecologist can know an awfully lot about what it means to be female, but he can never actually experience what it is to be a woman. So the observations that I offer are those of a *gaijin*, an outsider.

Second, making general observations about a culture, someone suggested, is like taking an x-ray. The x-ray might show the bone structure, but it will leave out almost everything else. Making generalizations about a culture might reveal part of the reality, but it will also leave out a whole lot, including many of the most important things. Not only that, but any generalization about any part of an ancient and complicated culture like Japan not only distorts and exaggerates, but any generalizations are also contradicted by other generalizations. So, I told my students, any impressions and stereotypes about Japan that they might have are probably true—but the exact opposites are also likely to be true.

I have mentioned, for example, that Japanese drivers tend to be cautious and considerate, but I have also explained that I stopped riding my motor scooter because I was cut off too many times by big busses and dump trucks. Both are true. Another thing that must be said is that a culture is never static but is always changing, so even if a generalization is mostly accurate, that is only for the moment. The generalization might be accurate, but that is only in the same way that a photo that is one frame in a motion picture film is accurate. The single photo leaves out the dimensions of movement and change. And one last observation: I noticed that the longer we were away from America, the easier it was for me to make generalizations about American people and culture. Likewise with Japan. The longer we are away, the easier it is to think that we got the picture. We have been away from Japan for more than fifteen years now so it is rather easy for me to offer these generalizations and reflections, even though I know full well that what I have to say is grossly distorted and things have changed a lot since we last lived there in 2005. And I have changed, too.

Having said all of that, it is easy to recognize that there are many very serious problems with which the Japanese people have had to deal, and I have already mentioned some of those. A partial list includes: the injustices suffered by the *burakumin* outcaste community; employees who were exploited (and even abused) by their employers, leading to, among many other things, a pattern of premature death from over work known as *karoshi*; women who were stifled in their marriages and family situations and were sometimes touched inappropriately by “perverts” (*chikan*) who took advantage of situations in crowded trains and subways; students who suffered under the tyranny of their teachers and bullying by their fellow students; and levels of bribery and corruption in high places that we did not really learn about until later. There was in Japan a small party of extreme nationalist zealots who were apparently in league with the *yakuza*, the Japanese equivalent of the Mafia. In many ways, the whole system was built on a corrupt and artificial political and economic foundation that collapsed when the “bubble economy” burst early in the 1990s. (In many ways the bursting of Japan’s bubble economy was not that much different from what happened in the “Great Recession” in the U.S. 20 years later.) These and other problems in the institutions of society resulted in alarmingly high rates of suicide, the phenomenon of social withdrawal and isolation that is known as *hikikomori*; and rising levels of homelessness, especially among middle-aged men who lost their jobs and their “place” in society, so they simply disappeared into the skid rows and homeless camps in Tokyo, Osaka, and other large cities, and eventually died anonymously. In addition to these man-made calamities, Japan possesses few of the natural resources that are necessary for survival in an industrial, urban society. Virtually all of their

gas and oil and more than 60% of their food must be purchased and imported from abroad. And we all know about the natural disasters that devastate Japan from time to time, such as the typhoons that frequently blow through the islands, the huge earthquake that destroyed much of Kobe in 1994 and the earthquake and tsunami that hit the northeast coast in 2010. The list could be made longer, but perhaps this is enough to indicate that the many challenges with which Japan must deal are formidable, indeed.

I have made several passing references to the role of Japan in WW II so perhaps I would be remiss if I did not make just a few more brief comments about that painful topic. What happened before and during WW II represented the culmination of tendencies that began in the early 1890s (or even before that during the feudal Tokugawa Period) when the Meiji government decided to build Japan into a strong, modern industrial and military state using western technology but based on Japanese ethics (*wakon-yousai*). Their success in this was evident as early as 1895 when Japan defeated China in the Sino-Japanese War and, even more dramatically, in 1905 when Japan destroyed the Russian navy and defeated Russia, a European power, in the Russo-Japanese War. After some gestures toward a more open and democratic society during the Taisho period in the 1920s, the militarists assumed dominance in the Japanese government and led the country, step-by-step, toward expansion through military conquests into China and many other parts of Asia, all under the umbrella of “The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere,” and all in the name of the Emperor, the direct descendent, as the myth promoted by the government would have it, of the Sun-Goddess who had founded Japan. So the Emperor was not only the nominal patriarch of all of the families in all of Japan, but he represented in his divine person the nation as one sacred entity (*kokutai*) to whom ultimate loyalty was due.

The militarists translated this ideology into a totalitarian state that was expansionist externally and demanded total sacrifice, even to death, of every subject under the Imperial rule. Impressive successes in China, in the attack on Pearl Harbor and in other military victories during the early stages of WW II gave Japanese leaders and followers alike a sense of invincibility and a confidence that ultimate victory was assured, just as it had been when the *kamikaze* (divine wind) had protected Japan from two Mongol invasions from Korea during the 13th century. Even as the realities of imminent total defeat pressed in upon them, the old generals who claimed to speak in the name of the Emperor, were determined to fight on, even though that might mean the death of the 70 million citizens of Japan. Sacrificial, suicidal death would be an end to the war that was more honorable than surrender, according to their old *samurai* ethic. Only when the Emperor, who almost never made policy decisions, announced in his quivering, high pitched voice, in his first ever radio broadcast, that the time had come to “suffer the

insufferable” and end the war were the Japanese people able to “accept the unavoidable.” But even then some 2000 military officers preferred death to surrender and took their own lives, many through the ritual act of *seppuku* (disembowelment). A recent reading of Paul Ham’s detailed (629 pages) account of the events that led to and followed the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki gave me an even deeper understanding of the terrible suffering that the Japanese people endured during and after the war. And it was not only the members of the military and the victims of the A-bombing who suffered. It was almost everyone in Japan. I have a heightened sense of appreciation for what the Japanese people accomplished in their recovery from almost total devastation, materially, socially, and spiritually. It is a truly amazing story.

If Japan had these many dark sides, what was there to appreciate? Many things! To begin, the geographic situation of the archipelago makes for great natural beauty: mountains, streams, waterfalls, lakes, hot springs, volcanoes, islands and seascapes; great variation from season to season and from north to south and east to west. The mad dash from almost total devastation at the end of World War II toward economic recovery did lead to considerable degradation of the natural environment. We remember seeing rivers flowing (oozing, really) through Kobe and Osaka that were so polluted that the water literally bubbled and churned with toxic chemicals that formed a rainbow-like film on the surface of the water. It was ugly! But the government found a way to clean up much of this mess and people are now back to boating and fishing on these same rivers.

Japanese people have long been culturally inclined to do things in a “proper” manner. There almost always seemed to be a “right” way to do almost everything, from the correct way to peel and eat a mandarin orange, to how to close an umbrella, or even how to fold an empty plastic bag. Conforming to what was proper and expected took priority over simply doing things “my way,” as Frank Sinatra once famously celebrated in one of his songs. Courtesy and politeness were part of this. Formulas and scripts, mostly unspoken, guided many expectations, such as the custom of saying “Thank you.” not just once or in a card or note but face-to-face several times after receiving a favor. If we did something for someone, we could expect to receive a verbal “Thank you” the next two or three times we met that person, and, of course, we learned to do the same for people who did favors for us. This was often part of an elaborate “book-keeping” system in which people kept track of favors received and favors returned. Our elderly neighbor, Mr. Bunya, was one of many Japanese people who recorded all of this in a little notebook and he made sure that he had returned favors to everyone who had done favors for him before the end of the year so he could begin the New Year with a clean slate. Another one of many

customs that expressed sensitivity to the needs of others rather than just looking out for one's self was the tradition of pouring drinks for one's neighbors at a table and expecting those table mates, in turn, to fill one's own glass or cup, a tradition that required a high level of awareness of and attention to the needs of the people around one.

Ubiquitous bowing is also part of this. There are many subtle rules that specify who should bow first, how many times one should bow, how deeply, and how long the bow should last. When we caught ourselves bowing while we spoke on the phone, as many Japanese people do, we started to wonder if we might have been in Japan too long. The whole ritual of bowing signaled not only hierarchy (which it did) but also mutual courtesy and respect. This is something that the critics of President Obama did not seem to "get" when he was criticized for bowing to the Emperor of Japan, something that president Trump conspicuously refused to do when he met the new Emperor in May 2019. I have already mentioned that there were "correct" ways to speak, depending on the social circumstances. But there were also many occasions, such as on the crowded commuter trains, when the proper thing to do was to not say anything at all. In fact, many observers of Japanese society and culture have commented that what is left unsaid is often more important in communication than what is spoken out loud. Of course this places a heavy burden of responsibility on the listener to be sensitive to what is *NOT* being said, and it does invite some misunderstandings, but it is also a part of a complex system of social relationships that is both challenging and rewarding. Politeness and following protocol can serve as obstacles to open and intimate communication, but they can also be very helpful lubricants for smooth social relationships. There are many sources for this emphasis on decorum, courtesy, politeness and protocol in Japanese culture, but one is the ancient tradition of Confucianism which has deeply influenced Japanese culture since the sixth century. One of the central teachings of the Confucian tradition was that society works best if people follow the rules of courtesy and propriety.

Just to show that I am not alone in arriving at generalizations such as these, I will interject just a few sentences from *The Lady and the Monk: Four Seasons in Kyoto* by Pico Iyer (1991):

Japan itself was firmly based on people's not saying what they meant and on the accompanying assumption that what was meant was rarely what was said. And women in particular were encouraged—even trained--to project an air of charming acquiescence that suggested everything and meant nothing. In a land where language itself was a force of separation as much as communion, where foreigners were invariably treated as symbolic carriers of abroad, and where everything was turned into

soft focus—surrounded by an all-embracing vagueness—it all added up to the most troubling of riddles. (123)

It did take some getting used to, but we also came to admire the commitment that the Japanese people have to minimizing the impact that their household waste has on the natural environment. In Komaki, especially, there was an amazing system for re-cycling household trash. We were shocked, at first, when we received a 16 page catalog of instructions on how to separate our household wastes into 13 different categories, each collected according to a different pick-up schedule. The various categories of household waste were deposited in one collecting area in our immediate neighborhood of about a dozen households, so the truck (manned by real human beings, not the big, violent and noisy mechanical behemoths that are used in most American cities) stopped at only the designated locations. Wet garbage, for example, was one category of waste and it was picked up twice each week. Wet garbage would only be picked up if it was in a special plastic bag that had to be purchased at the local supermarket, producing revenue to help cover the costs of the system. Newsprint, its own separate category of waste, had to be stacked and tied into a bundle with string. Magazines, likewise. And books, too, had to be stacked and tied together in a bundle. Waxed paper cartons for milk and juices each had a printed diagram showing how they were to be cut open, flattened, stacked, and tied into a bundle with other cartons of similar shape and size. Any plastic spouts or handles had to be cut out of the containers so the bundle of opened and flattened cartons contained only one type of material. The several categories of paper were kept separate from each other. Any clear windows on envelopes had to be removed and kept separate from the paper part of the envelope. Soft plastics were separated from hard plastics. Of course households typically produced more of some types of waste than others, so the pick-up schedule was varied. Fluorescent tubes, for example, were picked up only once or twice a year, as were things like broken pottery or chunks of concrete. Other categories were on weekly, every other-weekly, or monthly pick-up schedules. If we put out our newsprint on the wrong day, it was left behind.

Even though the neighbors and the garbage collection crew might take great care to keep the cement collecting area clean, it was inevitable that there would sometimes be some liquid spills or bits and pieces of this and that left behind, so the local neighborhood association (*chonaikai*) was responsible for making sure that someone swept and rinsed the area after each pick-up. So once a month or so we would find a bucket, broom and other cleaning materials on our doorstep, meaning that it was our turn to clean the garbage pick-up area, which we did for the specified number of days and then we would pass the cleaning materials on to the next household for their turn.

Most Japanese people are more willing than most Americans would be to put up with a system like this, but there are instances of non-cooperation, even in Japan. A couple of times we received written notices from the leaders of our neighborhood *chonaikai* that some of us were not keeping our materials in their proper categories, so the recycling people were threatening that they would not pick up our wastes if we did not do things correctly. Of course we wondered if we were the culprits, but these threats always seemed to be sufficient since the garbage guys kept recycling our neighborhood wastes. After a while we became accustomed to the system and learned to appreciate what they were doing as one way to show respect for our natural environment, so when we arrived back in Fresno it was painful for us to dump all categories of waste into one container. We are now using three categories of waste in Fresno, so that feels at least a little bit better.

I think that one of the reasons that people in Japan were willing to cooperate with local organizations like the neighborhood *chonaikai* was that they generally trusted the government to at least try to do the right thing. This was part of an ancient Confucian legacy that viewed social harmony as the most basic requirement for a decent human life, so government bureaucrats, who were responsible for maintaining social harmony, were at the top, not the bottom of the hierarchy of social respect. Merchants, in this old Confucian way of thinking, were at the bottom of the hierarchy since they were viewed as basically parasites who produced nothing themselves but only exploited the real productive work done by others like farmers who grew things and artisans who made things. The brightest and best students in the country were admitted to Tokyo University and many of the brightest and best of these graduates entered government service. People understood that and did not share the loathing for government that is so common in the U.S. It is hard to imagine people in Japan saying things like. “The government is the problem, not the solution” or wanting to “shrink government until it is small enough that we can drown it in the bathtub.” Of course attitudes toward Japanese politicians were not always entirely positive. During the 1960s, for example, many students (and others) violently opposed the Peace Treaties between Japan and the U.S. because they felt that the U.S. was too militaristic and too intrusive into Japan’s internal affairs. More recently, the government has not proven itself to be trustworthy in its reports about the problems with the nuclear reactors that were damaged by the *tsunami* in northeast Japan in 2010, so many people are now deeply suspicious about the safety of nuclear power in Japan. But for the most part “government” and “bureaucracy” were not necessarily bad words in Japan.

I think there might be another reason why Japanese people were willing to work cooperatively. During the Tokugawa Feudal Period (from about 1600 to 1868), the military government controlled virtually everything, from the Emperor on down. The government of the Shogun dictated that extended households (*ie*) would be organized hierarchically with the patriarchal head of the family legally responsible for the behavior of every member of the household. To help enforce this, the government also organized families into groups of five households (*gonin-gumi*) that were responsible to and for each other so that if any one member of any family stepped out of line, all of the members of the group of five families would be punished.

One of the concerns of the government at that time was that people might become Christians. Since Christianity was linked to the western colonial powers, it was viewed as highly subversive, so one of the responsibilities of the *gonin-gumi* was to make sure that no one in the group was a Christian. This whole system, too, was based on Confucian thinking according to which maintaining social order was the highest value. In a system like that, personal preferences were almost always subordinated to values like duty, loyalty, and responsibility. The Tokugawa system lasted for a very long time because there was little room for dissent or change. Something similar happened during WW II when the military government used neighborhood associations to help control the population. There was never really a “revolution” in Japan so as Japanese society has changed, many things were kept from the old system, albeit in modified form. So the *chonaikai* was essentially a left-over from the old system of the *gonin-gumi*, but in a much more benign form. Compared with what had gone on before, cooperating with one another in a neighborhood organization did not seem like such a burdensome thing.

There are other things to celebrate about life in Japan. Public safety, for example, was not really much of a concern. In fact, one of the positive “culture shocks” that one experienced in going to Japan was that one could take it for granted that the streets were safe. One did not need to fear for the safety of one’s person or property, even on dark city streets. It took some time to get over the built-in suspicion that many of us who live in urban (and even many town) areas in the U.S. carry with us. Without even being aware of what we are doing, we keep mental track of who is around us. It came as a shock to realize that one could relax and turn off the internal radar that many of us unthinkingly use to keep track, whether during the day or night, of who is around us on streets and sidewalks in many areas of the U.S. And, furthermore, it came as another shock to realize that one was very likely to receive back items that were misplaced or lost in public areas. During the five student study tours that we led in Japan, members of our groups misplaced or lost a total of six items: briefcase (mine), camera, wrist

watch, etc. We retrieved five of the six items from lost and found counters or from small local police stations (*koban*)—and the one item we did not retrieve was an inexpensive throw-away camera that the student did not want to bother trying to locate.

With few exceptions, one could count on people in public areas being courteous and considerate. Drunks might sometimes try to flirt or be insulting, but even this was almost always harmless. We did not really worry (much) when our young daughters occasionally walked through the bar district in Kobe on their way home from school at night. They could handle being told (in Japanese English) by some guy who had too much to drink: “I rabu (love) you!” Drinking even a little bit of alcohol provided a socially acceptable excuse to violate the normal rules of respect and decorum so that one could insult one’s superiors and fellow workers and flirt with women with impunity. At first traffic might appear to be too crowded, fast and chaotic, but after one learns the informal rules (e.g. the larger vehicle has the right-of-way), one finds that Japanese drivers are almost always careful and considerate.

Japan is basically a “middle class” society. There are small numbers of super wealthy people, to be sure, but not all that many. And there are people who live in poverty, including, as I said, growing numbers of homeless men, but the gap between the rich and the poor is not as glaringly obvious as here in the U.S. I mentioned earlier that in Japan the highest paid executives receive about 11 times more compensation than the lowest paid workers, compared with 475 times in the U.S. So, just as we were surprised to find most people in Japan living on pretty much the same class level, our Japanese visitors are shocked to see the vast areas of poverty (mostly non-white) in south and central Fresno and the conspicuous affluence of many folks (disproportionately white) up in the northern part of the city. In Japan there is much less geographic separation of the classes from each other, so in the same neighborhood one might find an apartment building that is old and run down, a new neighborhood shopping center, a small factory, a fine old mansion with a large Japanese garden, and many modest homes in between. Class levels are not segregated from one another by zoning regulations in the same way that one finds in many American cities that are divided into distinct use areas that separate classes and races from one another. It is harder to generate a sense of “class warfare” in a society where the stratification pyramid is relatively flat.

And then there is the whole matter of the health care system. It seems to be an item of faith among large numbers of people here in the U.S. that we have “the greatest health care system in the world,” so we should not change it, even though the American rates of infant mortality and life expectancy are actually far worse than rates in Japan, and this in spite of the very high portion of the American

economy that is spent on health care. It also seems to be an article of faith that having the government involved in health care will somehow inevitably make things worse than if we leave it to the for-profit insurance companies, or the hospitals that are required to provide emergency services for the large numbers of U.S. citizens who have no health insurance at all. We experienced the health care system in Japan as very satisfied consumers. There are many things that we do not understand about how the whole system is structured and financed, but we are incredulous when we hear American politicians talk about the horrors of “socialized medicine.” Actually, the Japanese system is similar to the health care law that was passed under the leadership of the Obama administration (“Obamacare”) in that many citizens purchase policies from commercial insurance companies. The big difference is that Japan offers the option of a government operated insurance plan, which is what we selected, following the advice of our Japanese pastor friend. We experienced nothing but excellent service in each of our numerous contacts with the health care system over a period of many years and we can recall no Japanese friend who expressed dissatisfaction. The idea that someone would become bankrupt because of medical expenses is simply not possible to imagine under the Japanese system.

Because there are many things that I do not understand about how the whole system is structured, I will offer only a few anecdotes that will reflect our personal experiences with the system. First, in each of the neighborhoods in which we lived there was a small clinic within just a few blocks of our residence. Often, but not always, a medical doctor lived in or near the clinic and sometimes there were a few beds for patients who needed a temporary stay, not unlike the collecting station in which I worked during my army days and the “urgent care” facilities that have recently become more widespread in the U.S. Anyone with serious problems would be passed on to a nearby hospital (private or public). So when I suffered appendicitis in 1963, we finally called the local MD and he came riding the few blocks to our house on his scooter to declare me to be in bad shape and he recommended immediate hospitalization and surgery, so I ended up in the Roman Catholic Kaisei Hospital in Kobe. As seemed to be true of most medical professionals that we knew about, these local doctors seemed to live a modest, middle class life-style with pay that is approximately on the same level as a school teacher (whose pay is generally somewhat higher than educators in the U.S.). Our dentist in Komaki, who had studied at the University of Southern California and operated a large dental clinic, drove a big BMW, but that did not seem to be the norm. Staff in his clinic paid far more attention to education and preventive care than anything we have experienced here. We had a great deal of confidence in the professional competence of each of the doctors with whom we had contact. We never sensed any hesitance at all on the part of

any of our doctors to send us on for more specialized care. I am sure that there are medical doctors in Japan who have found ways to become very wealthy, but I do not think there are many who can boast the one million dollar annual salaries that were reported by a group of cancer specialists here in Fresno.

One of Ruth's experiences with the system was typical of the kind of care we received. In the spring of 2003 she received notice that a mobile x-ray unit would be doing mammograms in our neighborhood in Iwade-cho, so she made an appointment. The results of the x-ray were not conclusive, so she received notice that she should visit the Wakayama Prefectural Hospital in nearby Wakayama City. The MD there ordered another x-ray, which was also inconclusive, so he suggested that she should have a needle biopsy and sent her down the hall with her x-rays. After the biopsy the physician reported that the biopsy showed no cancer cells, but that it should be checked out further. When we told him that we were leaving shortly for the U.S. and would be moving to the Nagoya area after our return to Japan, he said he would send her file with a note to an acquaintance of his in the Nagoya National Cancer Hospital. After we were settled into our residence in Komaki, we made an appointment to visit the MD in the Cancer Hospital in Nagoya. The doctor in Nagoya ordered another x-ray and then a needle biopsy. We all took a lunch break and then he did the needle biopsy, finally assuring Ruth with some confidence that there was no malignancy. All of this in one visit. The promptness and competence with which everything happened was truly amazing to us. Our co-pays were consistently very low. We might have suspected that we were receiving special treatment because we were foreigners but everything we heard from our Japanese friends indicated that our experiences were typical.

The system worked because there is a societal commitment in Japan that just as everyone should have access to public services such as schools, roads, electricity and waste disposal, everyone is also entitled to access to decent health care. Several things (in addition to greater trust in government to do the right thing) combined to make this more possible in Japan than in the U.S. First, the Japanese government invested far fewer of their financial resources in the military than the U.S. government does, leaving greater proportions of their tax dollars for medical and other social services. Obesity levels were far lower in Japan (4%) than in the U.S. (40%), reducing the costs of obesity-related diseases. Obesity rates were lower in Japan than in the U.S. because of their more healthy diet and their more active lifestyle (e.g. more walking, cycling and climbing stairs). Japanese medical professionals seemed to be more content than medical people in the U.S. to live a modest middle-class lifestyle. On the negative side, though, was the fact that smoking was more prevalent in Japan than in the U.S., partly because a

governmental monopoly on tobacco provided a major source of revenue, so the government was hesitant to support a campaign to reduce the use of tobacco, even though this would have contributed to better health among their citizens.

They certainly did not get everything right, but the contrast between the Japanese and U.S. responses to the COVID-19 pandemic could not be more stark. In Japan the “curve” of cases followed the typical pattern of early increase and then decrease (with later “surges” in the numbers) because, as in almost every nation on the planet, the government instituted mask-wearing, social distancing, etc. policies and the citizens complied. Not so in the U.S. President Trump refused to adopt national policies, “politicized” the national health agencies and reporting on the pandemic, made mask-wearing a test of constitutional and political orthodoxy, refused to accept responsibility himself, pushing the responsibility for leadership onto the state governors and city mayors. I will say more about the pandemic and politics in a digression near the end of these memoirs.

Many things could be said about the unique role that religion has played in Japanese society, but here I will mention only one, and that is the way in which several religious traditions are treated as complementary, not as in conflict, or mutually exclusive. Actually, most Japanese will say, if they are asked, that they have no religion at all, and this is true if religion means a personal faith or commitment to a specific deity, or set of religious ideas, organization, or rituals. Most Japanese continue to follow practices from three different religious traditions, but they do so as matters of tradition or custom and as members of groups and communities, not as individuals out of personal faith or conviction. Shinto is the ancient, indigenous, animistic “Way of the gods (*kami*)” that is celebrated in communal groups such as the neighborhood, company, or, even the entire nation of Japan as a sacred entity with the Emperor (who, according to the myth, is a descendant of the *kami*) as head. Robert Bellah saw so many affinities between Japanese National Shinto and American patriotism that he called American “civil religion” “American Shinto.” During WW II the Japanese government insisted that Shinto is not a religion at all. It is simply a tradition of patriotic or community observances that citizens and neighbors do as a matter of course, so one does not necessarily believe in, or convert to, or join Shinto. Like the language and other components of Japanese culture, Shinto is just “there” as part of what it means to be Japanese.

Buddhism was imported into Japan from China by way of Korea during the sixth century. Some of the many schools of Buddhist thought in China were imported into Japan and other new forms were developed in Japan. During the 17th century the military government decided to use Buddhism to help

enforce its control over the population and to keep Christianity out of the country. I will say more about this later, but Buddhism became a religion of rites that are done in commemoration of the dead and it was practiced by the family. To this day, as in India and China, during the Buddhist *bon* festival, a large portion of the population exits the urban areas to return to their ancestral homes in the countryside for a big family reunion, ancestors included. Confucianism was also imported from China as a system of ethics.

Shinto, Buddhism, and Confucianism each contributed something to the well-being of the person, the family, the community, and the nation. Over a period of several centuries, these three religious traditions developed a kind of division of labor. As I will explain later, Buddhism came to be associated with, among other things, death and dying. Until recently, almost all funeral and memorial rituals were conducted according to Buddhist practices. Weddings, sex, and the birth and dedication of children were celebrated with Shinto symbolism. (In Nagoya we occasionally went with American friends to visit two Shinto shrines, one dedicated to penises and the other to vaginas, both naturally shaped, or carved from wood and stone, including a ten foot penis carved from a log.) Everyday ethical ideals were rooted in Confucianism. One did not necessarily choose to belong to one tradition or the other, and none of this was anything that most people thought or talked about very much.

An early introduction to this new and different (for us) Japanese way of being religious happened in Toyonaka after we had been in Japan for just over one year. As Ruth and I were strolling through the grounds of a very old Buddhist temple not far from our home in Toyonaka, we came upon a small Shinto shrine inside the temple complex. “Wait a minute!” I said to Ruth. “This is a Buddhist temple. What is this Shinto shrine doing here? I suppose we will find something Christian in here, too.” Sure enough. When we came to the cemetery that was part of the temple complex, we found a Christian section where the family grave stones were marked with crosses. We became accustomed to this inclusive approach to religion soon enough, but it is easy to see how disruptive an exclusive form of Christianity can be in a situation like this. First of all, Christian conversion is usually supposed to be for *individuals*, so this immediately dislodges the convert from the larger communities—family, neighborhood, company, nation. And in a situation where Shinto, Buddhism, and Confucianism are tightly woven into the history, culture and everyday practices of the citizens of the nation, it is virtually impossible to reject all of this and still retain any kind of identity as a Japanese person.

I am ready now, finally, to return to a question that I introduced earlier in these memoirs: Why did we spend so many years in Japan? I think I can now suggest another answer than just that we liked

Japanese food—or even just because we felt a spiritual calling. I think that in many ways Japan felt like the old world that had been “home” for me in my early years. I have already described some of the characteristics of Japanese society and culture that we admired and enjoyed, so I will not repeat any of that here, but I would like to introduce four additional Japanese words that I think express quite clearly some of the ideas that are foundational to life in any community, whether in Japan, in Reedley, or anywhere. I am quite certain that similar notions are conveyed by terms in other languages such as Hebrew in the Old Testament, Aramaic and Greek in the New Testament, and in the Latin used by the early church fathers. It is my hope that using the Japanese terms will open some fresh perspectives on what are actually ancient and universal themes.

The first term is *gaman*. My *Kenkyusha* dictionary provides a long list of English words that can be used to translate *gaman*, including “patience,” “endurance,” “self-control,” or “to put up with.” The two Chinese characters (*kanji*) might make the basic idea clearer. *Ga* is a word for the “self,” or “ego.” *Man* means to “neglect” or, even, “despise,” so to do (*suru*) *gaman* is to “put aside,” or “put down” one’s self, and some degree of that is certainly one prerequisite for having any form of viable community. One cannot construct a society if each individual thinks only of his/her own personal self-interests. At some point, community requires that self-interests be set aside for the sake of some one or some thing outside of one’s own self, and that is one part of what it means to do *gaman*. The Japanese people were generally very good at doing *gaman* and I think I resonated with that because I recognized that as one of the virtues of the old world in which I grew up. Sometimes it is necessary to subordinate one’s personal inclinations and desires for some greater good.

A second word, *giri*, provides a more positive definition of what one *should* do instead of simply making one’s own self the center of the universe. *Giri* is usually translated as “duty,” “responsibility,” or “obligation” but the root meaning of the first Chinese character, *gi*, is “justice,” so the basic idea of *giri* is to live according to what is just, or right in relationships. It is not always easy to know precisely what this means in practice, but it is clear that without some willingness to place some thing or some one else higher than one’s own self-interests (to do *gaman*), there can be no “justice” or “rightness” in human relationships. So to do one’s duty, or to fulfill one’s responsibilities is to work toward what will be right and good for others rather than to think only about what is good for one’s self.

Of course a life of only self-deprivation and subservience to the interests of others can be an oppressive existence indeed, and at many points in Japanese history and for many people in Japan and elsewhere that has been pretty much the whole story, as was often the case in the old Mennonite communities as

well. So another Japanese term, *ninjou*, provides somewhat of a counterbalance to an overemphasis on external expectations and constraints. English words that have been used to translate *ninjou* include “humanity,” “human feelings,” and “sympathy,” but I do not think these definitions are adequate. Again, the Chinese characters might help to clarify the meaning. The first Chinese character means “human person” and the second character means “feeling,” “inclination,” or “affection,” so the basic idea of *ninjou* is to recognize that human beings are not merely passive puppets or programmed robots, but we are also each individual personal subjects, each with our own particular sentiments and inclinations, and these, too, must be taken into account if we want to have decent human relationships. Of course social expectations (e.g. *giri*) and human feelings (*ninjou*) are often in conflict with one another, and, indeed these conflicts are often the stuff of which Japanese stories are made. So, for example, the daughter of an important lord falls deeply in love (*ninjou*) with a lowly servant, but she is obliged (*giri*) to marry another man with whom a marriage has been arranged by their families. In situations like this, both *giri* and *ninjou* are important and legitimate, but, tragically, they cannot both be realized at the same time, so what to do? In many Japanese stories, double suicide provided one way out. There is no optimistic presumption in Japanese culture that everything will always turn out OK. Sometimes things go bad and that can’t be helped. Nothing can be done about it, so people often say, with a fatalistic shrug, “*shikatanai*.” That is just the way things are.

I want to add just one more Japanese term because it points to something that seems to be very important in Japanese culture that is quite different from our own. The word is *amai*, which can usually be translated as “sweet,” as in sugar or candy, but the verb form, *amaeru*, moves toward another meaning, which is “dependency,” or “leaning or depending on the good will of others.” The word is used in a pejorative sense for a “spoiled” or “pampered” child, but that only means that the child (adults can be guilty of this, too) has overdone her or his dependency and is taking undue advantage of the good graces of others. Many years ago Japanese psychiatrist Takeo Doi made the case that *amae* can also be used in a positive sense, as a way of recognizing that we human beings are *always* dependent on others, so it is OK to acknowledge and accept the reality of dependency and to simply and unapologetically place one’s self under the care of others. Doi suggested that the use of *amae* in this positive sense points to one of the fundamental differences between Western and Japanese cultural ideals. For most of us in the West, being independent is one of our highest values. One of our goals in childrearing is to prepare children to transition from dependency to independence, so that, insofar as possible, we can avoid dependency, and when we are forced to recognize our dependence on others

because of illness or the frailties of old age, that is something we feel we must apologize for. I remember Ruth's mother's repeated apology, "I'm sorry!" when she received care because in the frailty that came with old age she was no longer able to care for herself. Being dependent often makes us feel like we are somehow doing something wrong that we need to apologize for.

Since I was in Japan long enough to simply take it for granted that we are all in many ways and at all times mutually dependent upon one another, I was amazed when President Obama got into trouble during the 2012 presidential campaign because he said that a businessman does not build his business all by himself but is dependent on many others for his success. Of course the reality is that we are all always dependent on many others for many things! "No man is an island..." In Japanese culture, to be *amae* can mean that it is quite OK to accept the reality of our dependence on others and to graciously and gratefully allow others to care for us, since dependency is as natural a part of being human as independence.

Our most memorable experience of a Japanese friend being *amae* was when he arrived in Fresno without having made any previous plans or arrangements, except that he wanted to golf, and he shamelessly and unapologetically expected us to totally take care of him—which we did. He probably overdid *amae* in this situation (He was "too *amae*," or "*amae-sugiru*," which put him in the selfish or "spoiled" category.) but he obviously felt very free to accept care from us in ways that I have never been able to do. Of course this also created a sense of obligation on his part to reciprocate (*on*), which he did with gifts, including an expensive telephoto lens for my camera ("Very good for taking photos of nudes," he said.). One evening several years after his visit in Fresno, we received a telephone call from him from Japan. He was concerned about us because he heard a news report that there had been an earthquake in Coalinga, California, and when he checked his map, he learned that it was not too far from Fresno. I think this concern reflected, in part, the sense of *on* that he carried with him because of what we had done for him in his condition of being *amae* with us during his time in Fresno.

We did not see much of this, but many observers of recent changes in Japan are concerned that the community part of the equation is not being maintained very well. Traditional linkages between people are breaking down. One term that has been used to describe the newly emerging Japan is *muen-shakai*. *Shakai* is a term for "society." *Mu* is the Japanese word for the philosophical concept of "nothingness," or "emptiness," a notion that is rooted in Zen Buddhism. *En* means relationships, or connections. So a *muen-shakai* is a collection of people who are empty or devoid of social connections. More concretely, family relationships are breaking down as increasing numbers of Japanese choose to never

marry, the number of extended family ties and multi-generation households is in decline, the divorce rate is on the rise, the birth rate continues to fall, and the rate of single person residences is increasing. People are living alone. Second, villages and neighborhoods once provided the context for mutually supportive social relationships, but many Japanese people have moved from villages and towns to urban areas where rates of participation in the neighborhood associations (*chounaikai*) and frequency of social interaction with neighbors are in decline. Neighbors leave each other alone. Third, lifetime employment once meant that corporations provided a base for strong (sometimes oppressive) social relationships but those mutual commitments between company and worker broke down with the bursting of Japan's "Bubble Economy" during the 1990s. Workers are on their own. So the Japan that we once knew and loved is changing rapidly, looking more and more like the kind of *muen-shakai* that is all too familiar to many of us who live in the new urban America. A recent article in the *Japan Times* reported a rising sense of fatalism and despair among young Japanese who feel alone and hopeless about the future. It sounded a lot like the *anomie* that Durkheim had long ago predicted might happen as social relationships dis-integrate.

ENDO SHUSAKU: CHRISTIANITY AND JAPANESE CULTURE

Before I end these reflections on our Japan experiences, I would like to offer some comments on how nearly twelve years of living, working and teaching in Japan, plus many more years of studying, teaching and writing about Japanese culture and religion have influenced my own pilgrimage through the theological terrain as I sketched it above. I have already mentioned a number of relationships and experiences in Japan that have been very important in my life, but I would like to offer a few comments about the continuing influence of author Endo Shusaku on how I think about my own religious life.

Endo Shusaku (1923 – 1996) was one of the most influential Japanese Christians of his generation. He was a prize-winning author of numerous novels and other types of literature, many of which deal with relationships between Japanese culture and Christian faith. He was also a professor in several Japanese universities, a popular commentator on T.V. talk shows, and he was one of the leading figures in the creation of the Christian pavilion at Expo 70 in Osaka. Shoin Professor Takemoto and I once translated one of Endo's short stories, *Ryugaku* ("Study Abroad") that appeared in the journal published by Osaka Shoin Women's College.

Endo received baptism into the Roman Catholic Church when he was about eleven years old, and he spent the rest of his life struggling to understand relationships between his Christian faith and his identity as a Japanese person. He found this to be a struggle because he felt that there was a poor fit

between his inherited Japanese culture and his adopted Christian faith. Christian faith was like a ready-made suit, he said. The suit never quite fit. A devastating critique of both his own inherited Japanese culture and the Christian faith that came to Japan with western religious and cultural trappings appears in Endo's novel, *Silence* (*Chinmoku* in Japanese), which was first published in 1966 and made into an award-winning movie in 2016 .

Silence is the story of a (fictional) young Jesuit missionary-priest from Portugal who sneaked into Japan early in the seventeenth century in order to minister to Japanese Christians who were suffering under some of the most cruel persecutions Christians have ever had to endure anywhere. The military governors (Shogun) had prohibited Christianity, mostly out of fear that the foreign priests and native Christians might serve as the vanguard for an invasion by a European colonial power, a fear that was not at all unrealistic during a period of European colonial expansion. Rodrigues, the young Portuguese priest, was also in Japan to check up on his former seminary professor, Ferreira, who had reportedly apostatized and was now working on behalf of the Japanese government to convince native Christians that they, too, should renounce their faith. The young priest was captured by the authorities and finally had an encounter with Ferreira, his old mentor, who tried to convince the young priest that it was a mistake to bring Christianity to Japan. In one of the pivotal passages in the novel, their conversation includes the following:

‘For twenty years I labored in the Mission.’ With emotionless voice Ferreira repeated the same words. ‘The one thing I know is that our religion does not take root in this country.’

‘It is not that it does not take root,’ cried Rodrigues in a loud voice, shaking his head. ‘It’s that the roots are torn up.’

At the loud cry of the priest, Ferreira did not so much as raise his head. Eyes lowered he answered like a puppet without emotion: ‘This country is a swamp. In time you will come to see that for yourself. This country is a more terrible swamp than you can imagine. Whenever you plant a sapling in this swamp the roots begin to rot, the leaves grow yellow and wither. And we have planted the sapling of Christianity in this swamp.’

‘There was a time when the sapling grew and sent forth leaves.’

‘When?’ For the first time Ferreira gazed directly at the priest, while around the sunken cheeks played the faint smile of one who pities a youngster with no knowledge of the world.

‘When you first came to this country churches were built everywhere, faith was fragrant like the fresh flowers of the morning, and many Japanese vied with one another to receive baptism like the Jews who gathered at the Jordan.’

‘And supposing the God whom those Japanese believed in was not the God of Christian teaching...’ Ferreira murmured these words slowly, the smile of pity still lingering on his lips...

‘In the churches we built throughout this country the Japanese were not praying to the Christian God. They twisted God to their own way of thinking in a way we can never imagine. If you call that God...’ Ferreira lowered his eyes and moved his lips as though something had occurred to him. ‘No. That is not God. It is like a butterfly caught in a spider’s web. At first it is certainly a butterfly, but the next day only the externals, the wings and the trunk, are those of a butterfly; it has lost its true reality and has become a skeleton. In Japan our God is just like that butterfly caught in the spider’s web: only the exterior form of God remains, but it has already become a skeleton.’ (236, 240)

In *Silence* and other writings Endo struggles with these kinds of issues. This is not the place for a long discussion of what it is about Japanese culture that Endo thought was incompatible with the Christianity that the missionaries brought from Europe, but I will suggest a couple of things. First, many commentators have observed that Japanese religions tend to be practical and “this worldly.” That is, religious practices are supposed to produce tangible results in the here and now rather than in some ethereal spiritual realm or in a here-after following death. So worship of the transcendent creator-God of western Christianity gets transformed into prayers for the practical benefit of the person praying—sort of like magical incantations, or the “gospel of prosperity” that has some popularity in the U.S. these days.

Second, there is general agreement that one reason many former samurai warriors converted to Christianity during the Meiji period of early westernization (1867 and following) was that the samurai had been disenfranchised, lost their previous positions of power and prestige in society and were “homeless” (*ronin*) as far as status and identity are concerned. They found in the European and American missionaries and the Jesus they preached new models for how to live their lives in the new society. They found loyalty to new “lords” to replace their loyalty to their old masters (*daimyou*), but the hierarchical structures continued on. Their ethics were more like Confucian rules of hierarchy, loyalty and reciprocity than the Christian ethic of *agape* love. Something similar happened during the chaotic years following the end of WW II. Christianity in Japan tended to end up looking and sounding a lot like Japanese Confucianism and Buddhism.

In another novel, *The Samurai* (Warrior), Endo has another Jesuit missionary priest explain what he had learned in his thirty years of ministry in Japan. The father explains why the Japanese have little sensitivity to anything that transcends the natural world and why tens of thousands of Japanese converted (with mixed motives) and received baptism during the early period of Catholic missions only to quickly apostatize when the surrounding society turned against them.

The Japanese never live their lives as individuals. We European missionaries were not aware of that fact. Suppose we have a single Japanese here. We try to convert him. But there was never a single individual we could call “him” in Japan. He has a village behind him. A family. And more. There are also his dead parents and ancestors. That village, that family, those parents and ancestors are bound to him tightly, as though they were living beings. That is why he is not an isolated human being. He is an aggregate who must shoulder the burden of village, family, parents, ancestors. When I say that he went back to the way he originally was, I mean that he returned to that world to which he is so firmly bound. (164)

But it was not only Christians who saw their imported religion transformed in the Japanese context. Many Buddhist scholars also think that the spiritual vitality went out of Buddhism in Japan in the sixteenth century when Buddhism was adopted by the government as part of its strategy to solidify its control over the people. Every extended household (*ie*) was required to register with a local Buddhist temple and the temples were given exclusive control over all observances related to death, funerals, and the memorials for the ancestors that have long been so important to the Japanese. To this day most Japanese people can tell you which school of Buddhism their family is associated with, even though they know almost nothing about Buddhist teachings and practices. Until recently almost all funerals and memorials for the dead in Japan were conducted according to Buddhist rites, so that is about all most Japanese know about Buddhism. Buddhism in Japan became “funeral Buddhism.” An old documentary film that I sometimes used in my classes was titled “Japan: The Land of the Disappearing Buddha.”

But Endo was not only concerned about how western Christianity was co-opted by Japanese culture. He was also critical of the version of Christian faith that we western missionaries brought with us to Japan. He thought the western understanding of “God” was too rigidly focused on a God of laws, judgment, and punishment. The western God of Christianity was too much like a “father,” he said—and Endo did not mean that as a compliment. In fact, there was an old saying in Japan that there are four things that should be feared: earthquakes, typhoons, fires, and fathers. Fathers elicited fear more than love. Jesus, Endo thought, did not hold to the view of the demanding and wrathful father-God

that was so prevalent in the Old Testament and in first century Palestine. The God that Jesus presented in his teachings and through his life was all about God as love rather than wrath and punishment.

Jesus' God, Endo thought, was more like a "mother" than like the masculine God of western Christianity. Maternal love, he said, was not like the rigid and controlling behavior of fathers. He knew what this meant because of the acceptance and care that he had received from his own Roman Catholic mother, who had raised Endo alone after she and Endo's father divorced. He recognized the difference, too, because underlying the Japanese worldview is a sense of continuity between human beings and the spiritual dimensions of the natural and everyday worlds. Those spiritual qualities are named *kami*, and in the Japanese Shinto religious tradition they are viewed positively and with familiarity and affection rather than as demanding adversaries to be feared. Beauty, simplicity, purity, creativity, and productivity are some of the characteristics that Japanese culture associates with the *kami*, a form of spirituality that is quite different from the hierarchical and "imperialistic" posture of the Christianity of most western missionaries. No wonder so few Japanese responded to what the missionaries had to offer, and among those who did respond, many did not stay in the church very long. One estimate was that 85% of the persons who were baptized into membership in the church during the Meiji period were gone within five years. Participation in churchly life in Japan is all-too-often like a revolving door: old-timers exit as new-comers enter.

Endo presented his case in the form of many characters in his novels, and, especially, in his *A Life of Jesus* in which he compiled his own version of the life and teachings of Jesus, utilizing the latest in biblical scholarship that was available to him at the time (1973), but offering his own personal perspectives as well. He read and analyzed the New Testament as a novelist might, looking for an overarching story line and searching for messages that the authors might have hidden in the texts. He found a weak and suffering Jesus, who, like a mother, cared for the other characters in the story, many of whom were weak and fickle, first applauding what Jesus said and did, and then abandoning and betraying him when he did not live up to their expectations—until the death and resurrection of Jesus changed everything. Endo also emphasized the extremely political context in which the whole story took place.

Virtually all of us Christians in the west affirm that in some mysterious way the human, Jewish Jesus and the transcendent, creator God were uniquely joined in one person, Jesus (the "incarnation"), but I think most of us emphasize the divine part, often to the neglect of Jesus as an ordinary human person. I am quite sure that it is easier for most of us to picture Jesus with a halo around his head and walking

on water than it is to imagine him fatigued, perspiring, stumbling and collapsing on the ground, or struggling with uncertainties about what to do next. I am also pretty sure that we construct our images of Jesus more from the interpretations of western artists than from the New Testament texts (and contexts). Endo's portrait of Jesus tries to correct that imbalance by emphasizing the weakness and the humanity of Jesus rather the "triumphant" Christ of European and American "Imperial Christianity." He does not hesitate to disagree with some of the things that biblical scholars say in order to make his case for Jesus as a very human person. I am sure that Endo did not get everything right, and he was also very much aware that his was not the last word, but he did succeed in presenting verbal images of Jesus that have altered what I previously carried with me in my mind.

None of this would be particularly troublesome to the many people who see "Christian" and "Catholic" as mutually exclusive, so the concerns expressed by Roman Catholic Endo Shusaku could be summarily dismissed, or to true fundamentalists who are totally confident that their own understandings of Christianity are exactly what the Bible teaches, free of any distortions and without any need for correction. But our many years in Japan and my work with Endo and others like him made me wonder. If Christianity in Japan is like a suit that does not fit, a sapling with rotted roots, or the skeleton of a butterfly that is caught in a spider's web, what about Christianity and American culture? I am very sure that the individualism, materialism, militarism, and patriotism (American Civil Religion) that are so dominant in so many corners of American society and culture, including in too many of the churches, have resulted in understandings of Jesus that are just as far from the original as the Japanese distortions that Endo was so concerned about.

In his novel, *The Samurai*, Endo has a Spanish Franciscan missionary to Japan make his final confession just before his execution. Father Velasco had spent many years scheming to gain appointment as the head of all Catholic mission work in Japan because he was convinced that the Jesuits had gone about it all wrong and only he understood Japan well enough to achieve success. Just before both were burned at the stake on an execution ground just outside Nagasaki, the Franciscan Father Velasco gives his confession to the other priest (a Jesuit):

I sought to satisfy my own pride by taking the name of God in vain.

I confused my own will with the will of God. (264)

I am quite sure that many of us would do well to make that same confession. Our experiences in Japan raised questions like this in my mind and my openness to considering issues like these indicates that I have continued my explorations of various places on the theological map that I sketched earlier.

But back to my personal story. I am not sure how one might test whether this is really the case or not, but my guess is that, even though Ruth and I went to Japan as missionaries and teachers, Japan had a much bigger impact on us, and then through us on our families, friends, and students, than we had on Japan. At least I am quite sure that each time we went to Japan, we returned home as different people from who we were before we left, while Japan continued on its own course with little indication that we had ever been there. And that “home” to which we returned was not the same as when we left, either. I will turn next to the “home” to which we returned.

FAMILY PHOTOS



1. Dietrich M Enns family, c. 1910



2. John Unruh home, c. 1915



3. Unruh family funeral, c. 1925



4. Cousins boxing raisins with grandpa Unruh, c. 1953



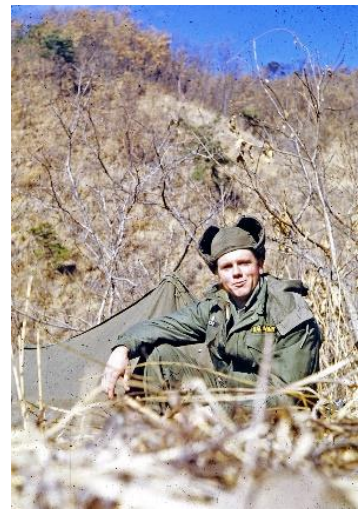
5. Reedley College track, 1955



6. Engagement party, May, 1955



7. Army Basic Training, Texas, 1955



8. Medic in Korea, 1956



9. Announcement Sunday, 1957



10. Wedding, June 20, 1957



11. New bride, new Pontiac, June 21, 1957



12. Extended Neufeld Family, c. 1967



13. J. W. Enns extended family, c. 1980



14. Fuller Seminary days, c. 1962



15. Missionary photo, 1962



16. On the "Wild Ranger" to Japan, 1962



17. With Asako-san, Toyonaka, 1963



18. English Bible Camp, Nosegawa, 1966



19. Karen, Connie, Arita children, 1966



20. Farewell, Ishibashi Church, 1966



21. Osaka Shoin Women's College



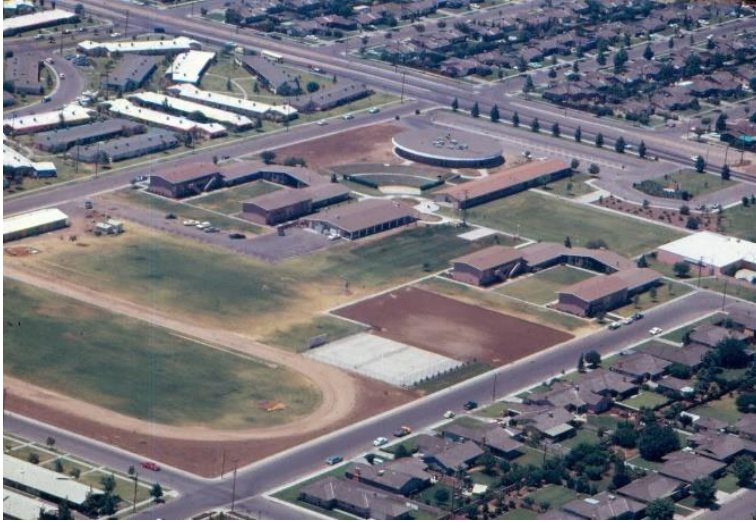
22. Osaka Shoin E.S.S. Camp, 1969



23. Okamoto neighborhood, 1969



24. Riding our Honda, 1968



25. Pacific College campus, c. 1970



26. Commune class, 1973



27. At home on Millbrook, 1971



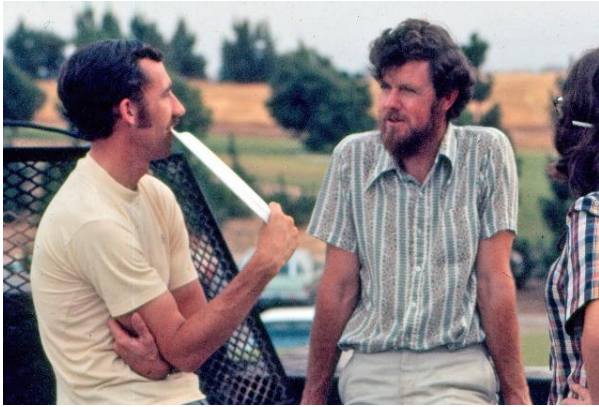
28. Kerckhoff days, c. 1980



29. Kerckhoff backyard



30. Kerckhoff neighborhood pool



31. With Gary Nachtigall, 1973



32. Kerckhoff potluck, 1975



33. Kerckhoff 20th Anniversary, 1992



34. Osaka Shoin at FPU, 1995



35. FPU in Japan, 1997



36. English class, Sakai-Chuo, 2002



37. Komaki Hope Chapel, 2004



38. Komaki friends, 2005



39. Hesston College, Kansas, 2011



40. Goldensun, Phoenix, 2014



41. College Community Church



42. Willow Avenue Mennonite Church



43. Suzuki V-Strom fun, 2008



44. Biker Emeritus, August, 2011



45. Neufeld cabin



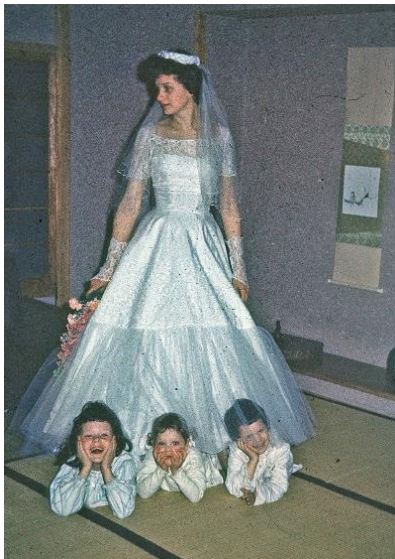
46. Cabin deck with Terri and Dan, 2018



47. Condo living room, 2013



48. Condo patio, 2020



49. Fun in Toyonaka, 1964



50. Main women in my life, Mt. Hood OR, 2010



51. Terri and Dan wedding, 1984



52. Chaffey Zoo with Connie's family, 2015



53. Zak's Graduation from U. of OR, 2012



54. Great Grandpa with Owen and Grant



55. Metolius River, OR, 1997



56. 50th Wedding Anniversary, Trinidad, CA., 2007



57. Christmas 2018

PART FOUR: THE OLD WORLD AND THE NEW IN FRESNO.

Ruth, Terri, Connie, Karen and I arrived in Fresno from Japan during the summer of 1970. Terri was ready to enter junior high school and Connie and Karen were elementary school students. I had recently turned 35. Since our marriage in 1957 we had lived in Santa Barbara for four years (Ruth for a total of six), in Pasadena for three, and in the Kansai area in Japan for six years, three and one half as missionaries and two and one half years as teachers at Osaka Shoin Women's College, with brief stopovers back in Reedley along the way. We came to Fresno primarily because Dr. Arthur Wiebe, my former teacher and principal at Immanuel and then president of Pacific College, hired me from across the Pacific Ocean to replace Dr. Paul Hiebert as the faculty member in sociology and anthropology at Pacific.

We returned to this area also because we did not want to commit our children to spending virtually all of their growing-up years apart from their extended family and their social, cultural and religious “roots.” We arrived with no savings, no retirement funds (not even social security since we had been working in Japan) and no health insurance, so my first three quarter time salary of something like \$7,000 plus retirement and health benefits seemed almost too good to be true. Since I had recently become (retroactively) eligible for G.I. educational benefits because of my military service in Korea 15 years earlier, I soon began a Ph.D. program at UCSB, so I had a part-time teaching assignment during my first few years at Pacific. Ruth took a teaching job with the Clovis Unified School District. A loan from my parents to help with the down payment made it possible for us to purchase a nice house in a nice neighborhood at 3991 N. Millbrook Avenue (**Photo #27**). From the time of our arrival in Fresno the College Community Church, MB in Clovis was our church home. So began our long sojourn in the City of Fresno.

I once asked the Amish man with whom we visited in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, whether it would be possible to have an Amish community in a city. “Oh no,” he answered. “That would be impossible because there would be no place to keep our horses.” I am not sure whether the lack of space for horses in itself precludes the possibility of constructing an urban version of an Amish community, but I am sure that there are many other things about urban society that would make an Amish way of life difficult to sustain. I think this is also true of the ethno-religious Mennonite

community in which I grew up. It was too agrarian and too ethnic to “fit” in an urban context, so there is no going back to either version of those old worlds. But perhaps there are elements of that old world that are worth carrying forward into the new. I think that possibility is what some of us tried to explore in Fresno.

In retrospect, I think we lived and worked with a very high level of intensity and commitment during most of our years in Fresno. And I now think that it was not any one thing that was the center or foundation for this high level of commitment. We were energized by a renewed vision of what it meant to be Anabaptist, especially as this was articulated in the Pacific College Idea that provided a "vision" for what Pacific College aspired to become. We invested a great deal of time and energy in the College Community Church in Clovis because there, too, we sensed a shared commitment to a common vision of what it means to be "Christian." We invested significant amounts of time, energy and money in our life together in the Kerckhoff neighborhood, where we moved in 1972. And we shared a common history with others in our small sub-community, since virtually all of us at the college, in the congregation, and in the neighborhood had roots in Reedley--and if not in Reedley, then in other similar small Mennonite towns, since there were few urban MB congregations until the 1950s. Many of us also shared extended family interconnections, with each other and with relatives in the area. Each of these factors was separately and individually important, but I now think that it was the fact that the Anabaptist Vision, the college, the congregation, the Kerckhoff neighborhood and our shared history and culture all overlapped and reinforced one another that accounts for the sense of dedication and commitment with which we lived and worked. We met many of the same people in the college where we worked, in the church where we worshipped, in the neighborhood where we lived, in the recreation we enjoyed--and we shared with this same small circle of people common faith commitments, a common history, and, with some, kinship connections. It was like a little bit of the old world transplanted into the new urban environment in Fresno.

I will next review several of these important institutional components that together in combination (a “gestalt”) helped to give structure to our faith and to our lives. But I will also reflect on how each of these institutions and communities illustrates the point that I made earlier in my discussion of social change: there are many “engines” that move us along in a certain direction. One of those engines of social change is “bureaucracy.” Bureaucracy is a term that describes the “rational” patterns that we increasingly use in shaping our institutions internally, and it is also a word that helps to account for why social institutions tend to become increasingly specialized and compartmentalized as we transition

from the old world to the new. In fact, it might not be too much to say that bureaucracy largely defines how we have put our society together in this new world.

FRESNO PACIFIC COLLEGE.

I will begin with the college, initially the Pacific Bible Institute (PBI), founded in 1944, then Pacific College (PC), then Fresno Pacific College (FPC), and, more recently, Fresno Pacific University (FPU) because the college was the main reason that we moved to Fresno and the college provided the primary economic foundation for our family.

As had happened in many other places where they settled, Mennonite Brethren who migrated to the western states (including to the San Joaquin Valley in Central California) soon began to plan for the establishment of an institution of higher learning. The MB's Tabor College had opened its doors in Hillsboro, Kansas in 1908, just over 30 years after MBs first began to arrive in North America from Russia. The first MBs arrived in the Reedley area from the mid-west in 1904 and by 1910 they had begun a German language Bible School. In 1922 a group of California MBs organized a "society" that was interested in starting some kind of institute or college, but, for various reasons, including WW I, the Great Depression and a denominational commitment to support Tabor College, nothing happened until 1944 when the Pacific Bible Institute was founded in Fresno. PBI flourished in the early years, growing in just five years to a peak of 190 students in 1949-50, but then enrolment declined during the next ten years to just 64 students in 1959-60. The leadership responded by adding a junior college liberal arts curriculum in 1956 but this did little to reverse the decline in enrolment.

To make a long and complicated story very short, Arthur Wiebe, who was a student in a Ph.D. program in mathematics education at Stanford University at the time, was asked by the PBI board to study the situation and recommend a course of action for the future: Just try harder? Close the school? Change to a four year Christian liberal arts college like Tabor? Something else? In 1960 the decision was made to change PBI to what eventually became Fresno Pacific University, and Arthur Wiebe was appointed president to make it happen. Pacific College was first a two year program but in 1963 the MB denomination in the U.S. revised its educational master plan to permit the school in Fresno to transition to four year college status, joining Tabor as a second MB college. The actual move to four-year senior college status happened in 1965 with 232 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) students enrolled. In what was surely one of the most dramatic events in the history of the institution, the administration

decided to apply to the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) for formal accreditation as a four-year liberal arts college in 1965, with the accreditation visit scheduled for the spring of 1966, even before the college had graduated any students. Moving this quickly involved a gamble not only on the part of the college administration, but also for senior students who would not know until just before graduation whether their degrees would be accredited or not. WASC accreditation was granted, setting off a huge celebration, including a caravan, led by a white convertible carrying president Wiebe and other triumphant dignitaries, from the Fresno airport to the new campus with its one, lone building, sometimes referred to as “Motel Six” because that is what the architecture looked like. Pacific College was on its way (**Photo #25**).

PC was still a very small institution when I joined the faculty in 1970. In 1971 there were 411 undergraduate students and 31 full-time members of the faculty. Five years earlier there had been only 257 students in the student body, with a small full-time faculty of 17. The size of the college grew to 436 by 1976, but then declined by almost 20% to only 358 in 1981, the year I became interim dean of the college. In those early years the college was also very MB ethnically and religiously. In 1966 more than a majority (57%) of the student body was MB. That ratio declined to around one third of the undergraduate student body during the decade of the 1970s and the percent of MB students has continued to decline since that time. As the undergraduate student body has increased to well over 1,500 (including degree completion students), the percent of MB students has declined further, and in the large graduate student body of 1500 or so, the MB presence is miniscule. During those early years virtually all of the full-time members of the faculty shared a Russian Mennonite ethnic background (88% in 1966, 97% in 1970, 87% in 1975, 91% in 1980). By 1985 the percent of the faculty with an ethnic Mennonite background had declined to 70%; in 1993 it was 51%; and in recent listings of faculty and staff at Fresno Pacific University, employees with ethnic Mennonite names are mostly long-time members of the university community. Very few of the recently appointed faculty, staff or administration share a Mennonite ethno-religious heritage.

In the early years of the college, it was important to us that the faculty and student body retain its Mennonite quality because we thought of ourselves as primarily belonging to and servants of this particular supporting constituency. The college administration tried very hard to keep track of MB high school students and made every effort to attract as many as possible to Pacific. In this the college achieved some success, managing to attract some very bright MB students who might otherwise have been expected to enroll in more elite institutions, but they chose Pacific instead because this was, after

all, "our school." In recruiting new faculty, too, searches focused on fellow Mennonites. Priority was given to hiring persons with a Mennonite background, sometimes over candidates with stronger professional credentials. This was a complicated and tricky business, of course, as the college tried to maintain an appropriate balance between our sometimes conflicting commitments to academic quality, maintaining our Mennonite identity, and serving both our Mennonite constituency and the larger community around us, all the while satisfying the requirements of the accrediting association.

There had never been any intention that the institution would be exclusive in its commitment to serving only the MB constituency. From the very earliest catalog it was made clear that the school was open to others. The vision was always to create a school that was Anabaptist and Mennonite in its core identity but the intention was to provide a service to the larger community in the San Joaquin Valley and beyond. The situation of the college was unusually favorable for a private Christian college, since there was no other such institution between the Los Angeles basin and the San Francisco Bay area. Tabor College, in contrast, was one of six small, church-related colleges within a radius of 35 miles in central Kansas that was populated with only the city of Wichita and a few small towns. The potential for growth and success in Fresno was almost limitless.

I think it is impossible to overemphasize the importance of the role that the Fresno Pacific College Idea statement played through most of the years of my tenure at the college. In 1966 the 17 full-time members of the newly appointed faculty invested a great deal of time and energy into formulating and articulating a particular vision for what they hoped to see the college become, since there were many types of institutions of higher learning in America at that time, and even a variety of models for what "Christian college" might mean. Defining the identity, mission, and vision for the school early on was a very important task. By the time I arrived in 1970 the Fresno Pacific College Idea statement had already been in existence for several years. The Idea statement had been very intentionally and explicitly shaped by the recently "recovered" Anabaptist Vision as it had been articulated by Harold S. Bender, John Howard Yoder, Al Meyer and others. In fact, one of the seven sections in the original Idea statement bears the title "Pacific College is an Anabaptist-Mennonite College." The remaining six sections in the original Idea statement were: Pacific College is a Christian College; a Community; a Liberal Arts College; an Experimental College; a Non-Sectarian College; and a Prophetic College. The faculty invested a great deal of time and energy in conversations about what the implications of the Idea statement were and how the ideals of the statement could be implemented in actual practice. We thought it was important to make every effort to "narrow the gap between the ideal and the real."

We wanted to see “God’s Kingdom come, on earth as it is in heaven.” At least insofar as we were able to do so in our own little corner of the world.

So, for example, because the Idea statement declared that Fresno Pacific College aspired to be a "community," considerable effort was made to make community a reality in how the institution actually functioned. Because community requires that time be spent together, FPC (as an Experimental College) for a time utilized an unusual academic week that consisted of four days for classes and one day (Wednesday) for "community" activities such as field trips, committee meetings and, of course, class preparations and part-time jobs. For a number of years the college followed the quarter system, which meant that classes met more frequently and for longer time periods than is typically the case in a semester system, thereby (hopefully) further fostering learning in community. For a time the nine week winter quarter was divided into three, three-week sub-terms during which students carried only one course, which met daily. One advantage in using this arrangement of time was that extended field trips and short-term international study programs could be scheduled during this term, further enhancing the possibility of more intense experiences of learning together in community. Freshmen were divided into small group "Collegiums" of 15 or so students, each with a faculty "Mentor" and a sophomore student "Mentor's Assistant." These collegium groups met regularly, and, to further facilitate good relationships between the mentor and students and fellow members of a collegium with each other, mentors received funding and encouragement to meet with each member of the collegium, two or three students at a time, over lunch in a restaurant during off-campus "Noon Hour Encounters." Large differentials in faculty (and administrative) salaries were deemed to be incompatible with the idea of community, so the salary schedule was comparatively "flat," with less difference between the salaries of the highest and lowest paid members of the faculty than is typical in other similar institutions. In fact, the college did not use the normal system of ranking faculty: Instructor, Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, (Full) Professor. We were all just “Professor” of sociology or whatever. .

Special privileges such as reserved parking spaces for some members of the community also seemed to be inconsistent with the community ideals of the institution, so for several decades presidents and other top administrators of the college looked for their own parking spaces just like everyone else. Since students were also members of the college community, considerable effort was made to include student representation in all of the major committees of the college. And, because committees provided a context for communal examination of issues important to the institution, there were many committees and the meetings of these many committees consumed a great deal of faculty, administrative, and

student time and energy. During the time that I was (part-time) chair of the Social Science Division and was also a member of several important committees, I once calculated that I spent 35 hours one week in committee meetings and other related administrative work, all in addition to my regular teaching load of preparing lectures, teaching courses, grading exams and papers, etc. The faculty decided that there was an upper limit to the number of students that could be admitted to the college and still maintain an institution-wide sense of community. Perhaps 600 students could still maintain at least some sense of community-wide, face-to-face recognition, but feelings of being anonymous in a crowd would intrude if the total number grew much beyond that. The College Hour program (the PC version of Chapel) met several times each week and was inclusive of everyone in the entire community—students, faculty, and staff, though mechanisms for the enforcement of this “requirement” were never very clear or effective. These are but a few examples of the many ways in which the college attempted to very intentionally “narrow the gap between visionary ideals and institutional realities.” It all seemed to be very exciting--to some of us at least.

But of course there were costs attached to these attempts to unite idealism with institutional realities. Sometime during the mid-1980s I realized in a conversation with a newly appointed administrator just how peculiar things that I had taken for granted really were. After an invitation to faculty, staff and administrators to attend some extra-curricular event, my new colleague asked me: “Does this mean that attending games, concerts and other student performances is part of my job?” I replied that one characteristic of the “community” that the Idea statement called us to is that members’ lives should intersect at many rather than just a few specialized points such as in the classroom or administrative office, and that is why I made an effort to attend as many community events as I could. He brought with him the specialized, compartmentalized professional role expectations that are typical in our bureaucratized new world while I was still trying to carry forward some residuals of the old “diffuse” role expectations in which the job descriptions and boundaries remain relatively “open.”

The college recognized that doing community takes a lot of effort and a lot of time, so the college did not require that faculty also “publish or perish” as is typical in most institutions of higher learning. In fact, in those days there was not much pressure for faculty to earn doctoral degrees. A master’s degree was good enough for many long-term members of the faculty. I thought that it was important for the college, for the students, and for me personally that I earn a Ph.D. and that I share my professional expertise with our larger community, so I completed my Ph.D. in sociology in 1979 and I did publish articles from time to time, though this was only in denominational or religious studies publications. I

never thought I had enough to say that merited publishing a book and I never invested enough time and energy in a research project that I thought would pass muster with a refereed professional journal. Perhaps I was just being lazy, but I thought that what I did reflected institutional priorities, and teaching and mentoring topped the list of priorities at that time. Using Ph.D. degrees and numbers of publications as measures of professional “excellence” came later.

Since the FPC Idea statement represented a vision for the institution, the FPC board approved the document and its subsequent revisions. But since most of the members of the board were agribusinessmen and other types of pragmatic professionals, it seemed to me that many of them did not really "get it." What seemed to the faculty to be a creative use of scheduling appeared to the board to be a wasteful use of the physical plant, which was empty too much of the time, and the quarter system allowed students to exit the college twice during the academic year between quarters instead of only once between semesters. Many of the members of the board, like most MBs, were suspicious of being too explicit about being a "Mennonite" college and were not sure about calling ourselves "Anabaptist." Even words like peace, community, and prophetic could be viewed with suspicion. I remember conversations with some concerned board members about what the "liberal" in "Liberal Arts College" means, and why the Idea statement seemed to depreciate the value of professional studies. Even the Non-sectarian statement that the college would not discriminate against students who desired the kind of education offered by FPC but chose not to make a commitment to Christian faith was suspect, because some of FPC's main competitors for students (and money) such as Biola in Los Angeles required a statement of Christian commitment not only from faculty but also from every student who was admitted. And the notion that as a Prophetic College FPC viewed itself as "a center of independent critique of all of man's (sic) endeavors" and would "serve as the conscience of society and the church" struck many as being entirely inappropriate and presumptuous. I think many members of the board and supporting constituency preferred that their institution support and reinforce rather than call into question the status quo in church and society. The contents of the Idea statement seemed to be very far from the fundamentalist "statement of faith" upon which the Pacific Bible Institute, the predecessor of FPC, had been founded. But I think there was a general consensus among the faculty and our fellow educators in Mennonite and other colleges and universities that we were onto something really creative and exciting (**Photo #26**).

There were also other points of tension. Sometime during the 1970s the faculty decided that the names of campus buildings should be used to educate members of the community about the religious heritage

of the college, so the names of historic Anabaptist persons and places such as Sattler, Marpeck, Witmarsum and Stassbourg were attached to campus buildings. The cafeteria, which doubled as the location for College Hours (chapels and assemblies) at the time, was called Alumni Hall in honor of graduates, but the names of other buildings should carry historic significance. Of course naming buildings in honor of major donors is an important part of the fund-raising strategy of many not-for-profit institutions, so it did not take very long before campus structures had names like MacDonald Hall and Steinert Field.

Partly because of these and a host of other interrelated issues (including some financial investments that did not develop as intended), Arthur Wiebe resigned from the presidency in 1975. The board appointed Edmund Janzen as president and in 1981 I was invited to serve as interim dean of the college while the institution searched for a longer term dean. Edmund, a member of the Biblical Studies faculty, was appointed president, even though he did not have a Ph.D., because he had a positive reputation within the MB constituency (and beyond) and it was clear that it was time for some major repair work in relationships between the college and its support base. Edmund was a “bridge builder.” I think I was invited to serve as dean because I had done OK as Social Science Division chair and because I had weathered a number of storms as lay moderator of the College Community Church.

I soon realized that I was seriously under-prepared for what it means to be the dean of a college (Remember the “Peter Principle” that every person in a bureaucracy rises to his/her level of incompetence—and then stays there.), particularly a small and struggling college that was in a pattern of declining enrollments and diminishing support, and, therefore in a budget crisis that seemed to be perpetual. Just a few of the many things that I needed to deal with: The board was insistent that we should change our academic calendar from the quarter system back to the more conventional semester system, so it was my responsibility to implement that, whether I agreed or not. For a time the college had no director of admissions, and so, by default, as dean of the college I was responsible for the recruitment of new students, about which I knew nothing, and the budget did not allow for the hiring of an experienced professional. The "Faculty Handbook" was out of date and incomplete, so I remember sitting in a cubicle in the library with handbooks from related institutions, working on that, thereby contributing to the bureaucratization of the institution. During the time that I was dean, three faculty members were released (The college did not have a formal tenure system to protect faculty.), all of whom were fellow ethnic Mennonites, members of our congregation and residents in our

Kerckhoff neighborhood. One had been a fellow student at Immanuel. Terminating a faculty colleague is always difficult, but especially so in our small and tightly knit community.

One of my tasks during my tenure as dean was to serve as a member of a committee that was charged with doing a revision of the FPC Idea statement. Like any mission statement that serves a useful purpose within an institution, the Idea statement has been revised from time to time as circumstances within the institution and in the surrounding environment changed. The initial revision process started in 1979 and ended with the adoption of a revised statement in 1982. Internally, graduate and professional development programs had grown in size and importance, in spite of the fact that the Idea statement focused almost entirely on the undergraduate part of the institution, so the vision statement and institutional realities needed to be brought into closer alignment.

As I mentioned above, some of the board members and many constituents were uncomfortable with some of the language in the original statement. Terms such as “Anabaptist,” “community,” “promotion of peace and nonresistance,” and “prophetic” sounded too much like the language of the rebellious 1960s. The process of revising the statement involved the investment of a lot of time and energy, partly because there was a commitment to be inclusive in how decisions were made. The process included not only faculty and administration but also members of the staff, board, student body, and representatives from the constituency, including pastors. Some of what happened in 1982 involved translating some of the original terminology into less provocative language but there were also substantive changes such as making more positive provision for post-baccalaureate and professional programs. In some ways the revision might be viewed as a “watered down” version of the original Idea statement, but I think it also reflected a recognition that a college always occupies an in-between space that must connect with *both* new insights and visions *and* with the “real world” with which it has to do. FPC education professor Dr. John Yoder used the analogy of a Christian college as living “between the monastery and the marketplace,” necessarily relating to both. The 1982 revision included only three sections: Fresno Pacific College is a Christian College; a Liberal Arts College; and a Community. The Idea was revised again in 1995, but I was not so centrally involved this time. The 1995 revision also included three sections, but this time they were: Fresno Pacific College is a Christian College; A Community of Learners, and, perhaps more boldly again, Fresno Pacific College is Prophetic. “To be prophetic is to serve the church and society by engaging in dialogue with and critique of contemporary culture and practice.” Each of these revisions involved a huge investment of time and energy, especially during the 1982 revision when I was dean.

A quick comparison indicates that the version of the “Idea” statement that FPU posted on-line in 2019 is an ever-so-slightly edited version of the 1995 statement, e.g. “college” in the old statement is changed to “university” in the new. I noticed only three other minor editorial changes. The statement remains the same more than 25 years after the most recent substantive revision, confirming my suspicion that the Idea statement is no longer a “living” document that serves a formative function in shaping the institution but is more like an historical relic displayed in a case in a museum. In this non-ideological post-modern age, real decisions are far more likely to be shaped by the advice of external expert consultants and by pragmatic considerations than by the particular theological and philosophical ideas that are expressed in the university’s statement of vision.

Another major decision for which I bear a disproportionate share of the credit (or blame) involved a proposed nursing program for which the college received a Federal Title III grant. Title III monies were designed to assist “developing institutions” in starting new programs. Plans had been made and we had agreed with Pauline Peters Kliever, who had once been a missionary colleague in Japan but had gone on to earn a Ph.D. in psychiatric nursing, that she would direct the program. But as the time for implementation drew near, some of us had serious second thoughts. The proposal called for piggy-backing much of the nursing curriculum onto existing science and other courses and for converting one of the student lounges into a nursing lab. Curriculum, staffing and facilities seemed to be minimal at best, and the trend lines in enrolments in existing nursing programs in colleges like ours were down, so it really looked like a big gamble against not very good odds. In those days almost all big institutional decisions were made by groups such as committees or even the entire college senate rather than by individuals, but since I was the dean, I felt very much responsible for our decision not to proceed with the nursing program. I still wonder if we did the right thing. A nursing program could have been a wonderful addition for the college *if* it could have been done well, and if anyone could have pulled it off, that person was Pauline—who later served for many years as director of the nursing program at California State University, Fresno. That was a painful decision. But, along with the work and pain that I experienced as dean, there were also a few pleasures, one of which was the “flagpole project.”

When I arrived at Pacific College, there was no flagpole anywhere on the campus on which to display the American flag. The story was that sometime during the “radical” 1960s some students had abused the pole, hoisting things like women's undergarments in place of Old Glory, so one summer day, with a wink of approval from an administrator, a group of student workers removed the flagpole from its

place in the front parking lot and it was gone. There was a strong enough sentiment on campus that it was inappropriate for a Christian institution that served the church and society internationally to fly any national flag, so for nearly 20 years no one took the initiative to replace the missing flagpole. Until one semester when president Janzen was on leave-of-absence and interim president Silas Bartsch (a former superintendent of schools in Reedley) pointed out that the college was in violation of a federal law that requires that an American flag must be displayed in a prominent place on the campus of every American school--public or private. So the question became where and in what kind of setting the American flag would be flown on the campus before one of the growing numbers of graduate students in education (or someone else) publically raised the absence of a flag as a legal issue and as a matter of patriotism. The college did not need publicity like that.

Goshen College, a sister Mennonite institution in Indiana, I learned, complied with the law by flying the American flag and the flag of the United Nations side by side, thereby declaring citizenship in both our own national and also in the global community. But since many of our constituents had negative sentiments about the U.N. (and other institutions of "world government"), that did not seem to be a viable option for our college. Our final solution was to place three flagpoles in a triangular position in front of the Special Events Center: one for the American flag, one for the nation of an international student in the student body, and one for an alum serving in another country. Which flag is the central one depends upon where one stands. Flags were changed monthly. The college declared thereby that FPC is, indeed, an American institution, but it also endeavors to welcome students from and send alumni into every part of the world. So for about 30 years the college has displayed, on a rotating basis, the flags of three nations, but a "flagpole plaza" project that was to provide explanations of what these flags represent was never completed, so until recently there has been no explanation of what the three flags signify. During the summer of 2019 several of us faculty emeriti worked with the university administration to move this project toward completion. The project was *almost* completed during the fall of 2019, but the final product is a watered-down version of the earlier proposals.

This was probably a case of "nepotism," but while I was dean I was primarily responsible for hiring Ruth as founder and director of the Older Adult Social Services (OASIS) program of FPC. Not that there seemed to be anything wrong with hiring family members in the old world, since, as I said, almost all of my first employers were relatives. When I arrived at PC, the dean was the president's nephew and the dean's brother and his sister-in-law taught mathematics and English, respectively. President Wiebe's son and daughter-in-law also became members of the faculty. So Ruth completed an MS

degree in Health Science Administration at California State University, Fresno, with the goal of establishing an in-home care program for senior citizens and their care givers using a voluntary service model. The Older Adult Social Services (OASIS) program was developed under the administrative umbrella of the college because it was intended to provide internship experiences for Social Work majors and volunteer service and paid work opportunities for other students in the college and seminary. The arrangement worked reasonably well for about 15 years until Ruth wanted to reassign her niece, who was an RN, from Day Care staff to Program Director when Anne Dueck left that position. But Ruth was prohibited from hiring niece Donna because it would have been in violation of the college's new nepotism policy since Donna would have reported directly to her aunt Ruth. So, in order to make it possible for Donna to work in the new position, Ruth resigned from her position as director. The new director did not share the original (old world) vision of close relationships between OASIS and local churches and the college, so the OASIS program continued on in a greatly truncated form and finally became entirely independent of both the college and local churches. Often, it seems, the old ways are not compatible with new boundaries between social institutions (in this case, family, church and school). In these and many other ways the pressures toward bureaucracy (including rules prohibiting nepotism) seem to be powerful and inexorable, and often for good reasons, but sometimes the outcomes are not what was intended. Not that the formal rules were always consistently applied. New president Kriegbaum hired his wife as an assistant and the wife of another president served as part of the faculty. Spouses Jeanne and Dennis Janzen were both members of the faculty for many years. I can think of at least one case where a parent and child both worked as members of the staff. But, oh, well. Inconsistencies like that happen when an institution lives half way between the old world and the new.

By 1985, Edmund Janzen had been president for ten years and I had been dean for four. It seemed apparent to both of us (and to others, also) that the MB constituency that owned the college (the Pacific District Conference of MB churches with a membership of about 5,000) was too small in many ways to support the kind of institution FPC was becoming: too few potential students, faculty, administrators and board members; too little money; and too much uncertainty about denominational identity, mission and future. President Janzen prepared a paper that called for "broadening the base," meaning to further open the institution to constituencies beyond the Mennonite Brethren, including expanding the board to make room for non-MB board members. Partly with the goal of opening the way for the board to "broaden the base" by appointing a non-MB president and to allow that new president to appoint his

own dean, both Edmund and I resigned from our administrative positions. A further reason for our resignations was that, for a variety of reasons, neither of us really wanted to continue in the administrative positions that we held. Following our resignations, we continued as members of the faculty, joining a series of other former presidents and deans who had "returned" to the faculty. The boundary between faculty and administration was porous, indeed. I think that there was a broadly shared consensus within the college that teaching and administrating were simply two different ways of serving the institution. The sense of collegiality was stronger than any commitments to professional specialization.

A number of factors converged to determine the timing of my retirement from Fresno Pacific University. First, a series of dates all came together in the year 2000. That was the year of my 65th birthday; I had completed 30 years on the faculty; and it was both the end of a decade and the beginning of a new century, so the year 2000 seemed to be a propitious time for my retirement. But there were other factors, too. A major consideration was that Stacy Hammons, previously professor of Social Work at FPU, was completing her Ph.D. in sociology and she had already been appointed as my successor in sociology. She was ready to return to Fresno and needed my job. Then there was the graduate course, "Values in School and Society," that had been a significant portion of my teaching load for about ten years. I had organized the course around Robert Bellah, et al, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*, which had been published in 1985 so my text was 15 years old in 2000. I thought the book had served the purposes of the course very well--an enthusiasm that was not always shared on the part of many of my students. I did a bit of fruitless looking around for a replacement text and I gave some thought to how the course might be restructured (which I was convinced needed to happen) but I decided that I was not the person to continue as the primary instructor for a course that was intended mainly for public school teachers and administrators. I lacked the legitimacy that comes with having actually taught in a public school and my approach was far too theoretical for the many students whose orientation was almost entirely practical and immediate. "I need to learn something tonight that I can actually use in my work tomorrow!" was the impatient comment that I heard from too many students. Many of the students also had so many other commitments to their jobs, families, churches, etc. that it was virtually impossible for them to find time to actually read the two books and to write the one major paper that I assigned for their three units of graduate credit. It was hard for me to accept expectations that were this low, since I had invested a lot of focused time, energy and money earning my own graduate degrees, so I always had questions about

how much learning was actually happening when I gave graduate credit for the very little that many students were investing in my course. I was quite sure that it was time for someone else to assume responsibility for the course.

Another consideration in my decision to retire was that the study program in Japan seemed to me to be an approach to education that was so much more effective than what can happen in a traditional classroom that I lost much of my enthusiasm for classroom teaching. Not that there is not a place for classroom work. For example, I found that my classroom course, Introduction to Japanese Society, took on an entirely new significance when students were using the course to prepare for living and traveling in Japan for one month (**Photo #35**). But the actual experience of personally encountering another culture in community with others was such a powerful approach to learning that classroom work simply could not compare.

Another factor in my decision to retire was the fact that my hearing loss made it increasingly difficult for me to conduct classroom discussions, or respond to student questions and comments—especially from reticent young women students with soft, high-pitched voices.

Finally, my level of commitment to the institution decreased substantially when the administration disallowed the ministerial tax exemption for housing for which I had been eligible for many years. Their explanation was that my continued tax-exempt status might put the institution in jeopardy with the Internal Revenue Service. This was in spite of the fact that at the time faculty in the Biblical Studies department were being encouraged to receive licensing as ministers; I was still technically ordained as an MB minister; and I was teaching religion courses in the Biblical Studies department, conditions which seemed to more than satisfy the requirements of IRS regulations. In response to my protestations, the administration reported that the board had already acted on their recommendation that my status should be changed. I am still not sure why this happened, but I do know that this, too, made retirement seem more attractive. I had always thought of my teaching at FPC as a form of "Christian ministry"--but if the administration no longer saw it that way, well, so be it. It did not seem worth a fight at that late stage in my career. No one (or even a few) of these considerations would have been sufficient to motivate my decision to retire, but taken all together, they combined to make retirement in 2000 seem like the right time.

My suspicions that there had been major changes in the nature of the university were confirmed some ten years after my retirement when several faculty emeriti requested a meeting with the executive committee of the board of directors of the university. The meeting was requested primarily at the

behest of current faculty who expressed a widely held concern that confidence in the president and his administration had seriously eroded within the campus community, in spite of previous official processes and agreements designed to improve communication between faculty and administration. For example, the president and board had dictated that there should be no direct communication between the board and the faculty. Even informal social contacts were discouraged. All communications between the board and the campus community were to be via the president. But many in the faculty had little confidence that their concerns about a serious erosion of morale within the university would be conveyed adequately to the board by the president. All of this might fit one kind of bureaucratic model for organizing an institution, but it was far removed from statements in the Idea that committed the institution to “patterns of leadership and governance that are servant oriented and participatory and which lead toward consensual decision making.” The board is specifically mentioned as part of the community toward which the institution aspired. Several members of the faculty were eager for some mechanism for regular direct communication between faculty and board, so they asked some faculty emeriti to try to communicate these concerns to the board.

The president refused to give his permission for a small emeriti group to meet with the board executive without his presence, so the president was present to listen to and participate in the conversation with the board executive. The emeriti group included Dr. Arthur Wiebe, former president without whose contributions (financially through his AIMS Foundation and otherwise as the person who had been primarily responsible for shaping the college during 15 of its most formative early years) there would probably be no Fresno Pacific today, or at least not the institution as we know it; Edmund Janzen, president for ten years and major shaper of improved relations between the institution and supporting churches in the denomination and the local area; Dr. Peter Klassen, Mennonite historian, former longtime dean of the School of Social Sciences at CSUF and chair of the FPU board for 17 years; and Dr. Dalton Reimer, long-time dean. Most were also substantial financial donors to the institution. I was invited at the last minute to round out the delegation.

The board chair opened the meeting with a declaration that the executive would not directly discuss any of our concerns or suggestions because our group had no formal standing within the organizational structures of the institution. Our role as faculty emeriti was not to critique and offer alternative suggestions, but solely to support the policies and decisions of the president and board. Our concerns, our request for the meeting, and our suggestions were unwelcome, inappropriate, and "over the top." Needless to say, we were stunned. In the words of one member of our group of emeriti, "My heart is

weeping." The meeting did not reflect the kind of institutional community to which we had given our professional lives. I felt like we were treated like little kids who were called into the principal's office for a good scolding. It also reaffirmed my impression that the realities of the institution had drifted far from the vision that was expressed in the Idea statement--though it remained "on the books" and was periodically invoked by the president as "the vision that drives the institution." It also reaffirmed my suspicion that the MB constituency that owned the university did not have the resources of persons or vision to produce a board that is capable of giving positive leadership to the large and complex institution that FPU had become. A board of truly wise people would not tolerate the rigid and dysfunctional form of bureaucracy that had evolved, nor would it treat its senior statesmen (and major donors) like our emeriti group was treated.

I felt blessed that I had been part of the institution during a time when at least some of the institutional realities still reflected something of the old world. Or at least it felt to me like it did. But, on the other hand, the board and administration might be right that there is no place in this new world for the kind of visionary, experimental, community-centered, prophetic, liberal arts, Anabaptist-Mennonite version of a Christian institution that we had given our lives to construct. It is entirely possible that there would be no Fresno Pacific University today if we had had our way. At least there is probably no place for that kind of Christian college or university in conservative Fresno and the surrounding San Joaquin Valley in California, especially now that many students seem to want to attend larger universities and the main reason given for attending any college at all is that college graduates earn more money. The "market" for what the FPU Idea envisioned, I fear, is shrinking. In fact, the whole shape of higher education in America seems to be in major transition and what has happened at FPU reflects much of that.

I have bemoaned many of the changes that have happened at FPU, but, nevertheless, it is easy to celebrate the fact that the institution continues to exist. Many students, especially from the surrounding rural areas and small towns, continue to benefit from the kind of education that only a small church-related college like FPU can offer. For example, there are many first-generation college students, particularly Hispanics from the central San Joaquin Valley, who might not survive on the campus of a large university but do thrive in the kind of social and academic environment that FPU continues to provide. This is also true for some of the international students who, through all kinds of interesting circumstances and connections, find their way to Fresno and to FPU. There are "heritage" Mennonites for whom FPU represents some degree of continuity with their familial, cultural and religious past. For

many kinds of students, FPU provides an introduction to a more open and broader version of Christianity than the narrow fundamentalism that is so prevalent in this local area (including many in the supporting MB constituency), and for increasing numbers of students, their first exposure to any kind of Christianity at all. And FPU provides a place of employment and service for a large number of faculty and staff, some of whom continue to bear witness to the radical Anabaptist faith that shaped the institution in its early stages of development.

What is likely to happen in the future, I expect, is that FPU will continue to grow in both size and diversity, and with further growth, the institution will continue to move in the direction of increasing bureaucratization in its organizational structures and more pragmatic emphasis on professions and careers in the programs that it offers. I am also guessing that FPU will probably move closer to the conservative politics and religious fundamentalism that is pervasive in the surrounding area. The FPU president's strong statement in July, 2015 of fear about the implications of the U.S. Supreme Court decision that gay and lesbian couples have a legal right to marry was one indication that the university seeks to position itself with the conservative evangelicals who continue to view responses to LGBT issues as an important boundary marker. The FPU president's statement came at almost the same time as two fellow Mennonite institutions, Goshen College in Indiana and Eastern Mennonite University in Virginia (Bluffton College in Ohio followed later), announced that they would no longer discriminate against married same-sex couples in their hiring policies, causing great consternation in the Christian College Coalition (CCC) to which all four Mennonite colleges had belonged for many years. Some very conservative member institutions immediately withdrew their membership in the CCC because they refused to be associated in any way with an organization that would even talk about including institutions who hire people in same-sex relationships. The two (later three) Mennonite colleges withdrew their membership in the CCC because they did not want to be the reason for all of this conflict.

More recently FPU became affiliated with the "Evana Network," a consortium of denominations, congregations, and institutions that professes to combine commitments to both Anabaptist and evangelical theological convictions. Many of the members of the Network were formally affiliated with the Mennonite Church USA but had withdrawn because of disagreements over a variety of issues. One of the major points of conflict was over relationships with LGBT members. And during the summer of 2017 the recently appointed president of FPU, Dr. Joseph Jones, yielded to pressures from MB constituents and terminated the services of a group of high-profile part-time seminary faculty who held strong Anabaptist convictions. He also re-assigned the "president" of the seminary to the teaching

faculty. All of this was much to the consternation of many members of the faculty and alumni of the university who continued to value the institution's historical commitments to Anabaptism and diversity that are still articulated in the Idea statement.

So the "culture wars" rage on. Recent statements and actions by FPU presidents appear to position the institution on the conservative side of the battle lines. But, hopefully, FPU will also, in part at least, continue to represent a creative local alternative to the massive educational institutions that dominate much of American higher education today.

COLLEGE COMMUNITY CHURCH, MENNONITE BRETHREN, CLOVIS, CALIFORNIA, (NOW WILLOW AVENUE MENNONITE CHURCH).

In Part Four of these memoirs, I am trying to illustrate two sociological truisms: First, everything is connected to everything. Nothing ever happens in a social vacuum. And, second, everything is constantly changing. There is no such thing as maintaining the status quo. I have tried to make these points in my summary of what has happened at Fresno Pacific and I will continue with these same motifs in my accounts of several other social institutions that have been important in our lives. But I think the changes that the College Community Church, Mennonite Brethren, in Clovis California (CCCMB), recently re-named "Willow Avenue Mennonite Church" (WAMC), has experienced in recent years have been especially dramatic. In the section that follows, I will describe what I think some of these changes have been; I will suggest some of my observations on how and why they happened; and I will suggest some of the issues that I think the congregation will have to address as it moves into the future. I have devoted a lot of space to my discussion of the congregation because it has been a very important part of my life and the life of my family, and because, in my opinion, the congregation illustrates some of the larger story of what has happened to many religious communities in America in recent decades. As is true of all of these memoirs, the recollections and reflections that follow are mine, and mine alone. No one else will tell the story in the same way. I will use CCCMB when I am referring primarily to the earlier history of the congregation and WAMC when referring to more recent developments. For the most part, construction of the new facilities represents a dividing line between the "old" CCCMB and the "new" WAMC.

SOME HISTORY

The first MB congregation in Fresno was the Bethany Mennonite Brethren Church, founded in 1944 during WW II, just as the numbers of Mennonites who were migrating from farms to cities began to increase. Bethany (and to a lesser extent the Butler Ave. MB church, founded in 1956), represented an attempt to transfer the patterns of theology, church life, and Mennonite ethnic culture from old farming villages and towns like Reedley into the new urban environment in medium sized cities like Fresno, Bakersfield and San Jose, so it was generally an ethnic and fundamentalist congregation.

The College Community Church, MB had its beginning in January 1963, partly to provide a more “progressive” alternative to Bethany and Butler. I know there was more to it than just this, but part of the story was that controversies involving the Bethany leadership and Bethany member Dr. Roy Just, who was then teaching sociology at Fresno City College and was later president of Tabor College (He was also the younger brother of my uncle Marvin Just Sr.) served as a catalyst for the formation of a third congregation in the Fresno area. Some people at Bethany thought Roy might be a modernist. There were many reasons why conservatives at Bethany were suspicious of Roy, but two reasons were that he used a dialogic rather than didactic approach to teaching and he seemed to be too positive in his attitude toward other religions. People who were in Roy’s Sunday School class at Bethany and affirmed what he was doing formed the nucleus of what became the CCCMB congregation. Most were in their 20s and 30s at the time, with a few somewhat older members who were in their 40s. The early intention was to call the congregation a “Fellowship” rather than a “Church” because the goal was to create something new rather than to simply replicate what other congregations were doing. So CCCMB had its beginnings as an attempt to create something new, but it was also, in part at least, an expression of reaction against the more traditional forms of Mennonite church life that were available in Fresno at that time.

Some of the contrasts between CCCMB and the other MB congregations in Fresno were related to generational and class differences in outlook and lifestyle. Almost all of the people who were involved in the founding of CCCMB were not only young but they were also mostly engaged in professional occupations such as education, medicine and social work, while the other MB congregations were more blue collar and small business-oriented in class and culture. The “College” part of the name of CCCMB was not because of connections with Fresno Pacific or Fresno City College but because the new congregation was located in Clovis, not far from the new campus of Fresno State College (FSC, now California State University, Fresno, CSUF). At that time both Fresno State and CCCMB were located

way out on the northern margins of the growing Fresno metropolitan area. As reflected in the “College” part of the name the congregation selected for itself, part of the original vision of the congregation was to have a ministry to students and faculty at CSUF, a vision that, as far as I know, was never seriously acted on and certainly never realized to any great extent, though there have almost always been at least a few folks from CSUF who have been part of CCCMB.

The first direct contact that our family had with CCCMB happened in the summer of 1966 during the CCCMB camp-out weekend in the Sierra Nevada Mountains near Hume Lake when Ruth and I did a presentation on our experiences as MB missionaries in Japan. Actually, we had known about CCCMB for some time before that. In fact, my father represented the MB Pacific District Conference (PDC) Board of Trustees during the early conversations about the PDC assisting in the start of a third MB congregation in Fresno and my brother, Harold, and his family had been part of the congregation during the years when he was teaching at Pacific. When we arrived in Fresno in 1970, there was little doubt that CCCMB would be our church home. We already had many friends in the congregation and we very much identified with what we understood the congregation to be about. We have been actively involved in the life of the congregation through most of the years since 1970 (except when we were away in places like Japan, Indiana, Kansas, and Arizona), teaching classes and serving in a variety of leadership positions, including the church council and several commissions and committees. We were members of the choir during most of our years in Fresno until I dropped out, mainly because my hearing loss made it difficult for me to hear what the director was saying, but also because much contemporary church music is above the range of my bass voice. I served as moderator (lay leader) twice, and for six months during the fall and winter of 2007, I was one-quarter-time interim pastor, filling in while senior pastor Bill Braun was on a leave of absence. Our ties with CCCMB are very long and very deep.

ON THE RELIGIOUS ENVIRONMENT

Many church leaders tend to be quite myopic, focusing almost entirely on conditions internal to their own congregations and denominations, but I think it is a big mistake not to recognize that there were many connections between developments at CCCMB and the changing social and religious environment that surrounded the congregation. The congregation was founded in 1963, just at the end of the politically and religiously conservative decade of the 1950s, and it took shape during the 1960s, one of the most turbulent periods in American history. The congregation attracted a certain type of young persons during its formative years. CCCMB provided a church home for many of us young professionals who had left our rural and small-town home communities and our local Mennonite ethno-

religious congregations for colleges and universities, for cross-cultural and international service and learning experiences, and who then transitioned back to the more urban environment in Fresno to live our adult lives. CCCMB provided a unique niche for people with this particular kind of personal history. But the congregation is now surrounded by a changed society and new generations of younger people with quite different life experiences and values than what the founding generation brought with them.

In order to set the social and religious context, I will briefly summarize some of the points made by Robert Putnam and David Campbell in *American Grace* (2010), their massive (673 pages) study of religion in America. Robert Putnam first gained fame in 1995 when he published an article and then later a book (in 2000) with the title *Bowling Alone* in which he made the case that Americans were disengaging from many of the small organizations (the civil society) that have historically served as the building blocks for the larger social system. He noted, to illustrate his point and provide the title for his work, that the number of people in America who were bowling had increased substantially, but the number of bowling leagues had declined, so more people were “bowling alone” instead of using bowling as a context for group relationships. In *American Grace* Putnam and his colleague traced some of the changes that have happened decade by decade in American religious life since the end of the Second World War in 1945. Their work is more than ten years old now in 2021 but their perspective on patterns of change in American religion and society is similar to that of many more recent observers, including Harris and Inglehart to whom I will refer in my digression on relationships between white American evangelicalism and Donald Trump.

The decade of the 1950s was a conservative period in which life for many Americans was centered around church and family. Church membership and attendance increased dramatically during the decade, as did seminary enrollments. People reported that religion was important to them personally and political leaders endorsed religious membership and participation as a good thing for the nation. In what Robert Bellah called “American Civil Religion,” the words “under God” were added to the Pledge of Allegiance and “In God We Trust” to American coins. During the late 1940s, evangelical and other conservative Christians proposed a constitutional amendment that would have proclaimed that America is a Christian nation. President Eisenhower was quoted as saying that “every American should have a religion and I don’t care what it is.”

I will cite only one statistic that illustrates the huge increase in the importance of religion in America during the 1950s. In 1945, only \$26 million were spent on new church construction, which makes sense since that was the last year of World War II and building materials were scarce. During the year

1950 that number was up to \$305 million, and in 1960 Americans spent \$615 million constructing new church buildings (numbers are adjusted for inflation). CCCMB was founded and constructed its original buildings during that period. Ruth and I married young, became parents soon, and I enrolled in seminary during the decade of the 1950s, so in many ways our personal lives both reflected and contributed to the conservative family and religious ethos of the period during which CCCMB was founded. The 1950s was a decade of a “baby boom” and a “church boom” and Ruth and I and CCCMB were shaped by and contributed to both of these trends.

The period of the “long 1960s” was an entirely different story. This was the era of numerous “revolutions” in American culture that have had a long-term impact: a revolution in sexual morality, increasing use of drugs, the anti-war movement, bra burning and the women’s liberation movement, rock and roll, hippies, communes and flower children, Woodstock, the civil rights movement and the war on poverty. Peace signs and “Question Authority” bumper stickers were everywhere. Putnam called these changes an “earthquake” that permanently altered the American cultural landscape, and, predictably, led to a series of “after-shocks.”

Looking back now, it is hard to know how much our lives during those years were shaped by Anabaptist notions such as nonconformity, community, pacifism and egalitarian ideals such as the “priesthood of all believers” and how much by the anti-institutionalism of the 1960s. They probably reinforced each other. Looking now at photos from those days, we did look a bit like hippies—though there were many parts of the hippie life style that we did not buy into (**Photo #26**). There were probably other good reasons for the heavy emphasis at CCCMB on “lay,” “team,” and “shared ministries” in our organizational structures, but it is also a fact that what we were doing fit in quite well with the anti-institutional spirit of the era, as did our quest for a greater degree of “community” in our living arrangements. Similarly, there were surely many good reasons to work toward greater equality between men and women in both church and society, but it was probably no coincidence that these concerns emerged as part of the agenda at CCCMB during the early years of its history, just as they were matters of concern in the larger society during the 1960s.

Putnam describes the next two decades of the 1970s and 1980s as a cultural “aftershock” in reaction to the tumult of the 1960s. Many Americans reacted by becoming more conservative. Politically, those were the years of Presidents Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan and the “silent majority.” Religiously, this was a period of growth in both the numbers and the significance of conservative fundamentalist and evangelical churches, the public evangelistic ministry of Billy Graham, and the experience of being

“born again,” of which President Jimmy Carter was one high-profile example, and a renewed interest on the part of conservative church leaders in playing a more influential role in American politics, of which Jerry Falwell and the “moral majority” is but one of many examples. It was no coincidence that conservative religion and conservative politics shared many things in common, leading to the strong evangelical and fundamentalist support for Republican policies and politicians that continues to this day. While conservatives worked to reverse many of the “radical” developments of the 1960s and called for a return to “traditional American values” and a “focus on the family,” many “liberals” sought to build on what they saw as progress toward ending racial and gender inequality—and, even, ending poverty in America. It was during the decades of the 1970s and 1980s that many people began to gravitate toward more extreme “liberal” and “conservative” political and religious positions, leaving the moderate middle significantly weakened. Attitude toward abortion was but one of the several pivotal issues that divided the population into two antagonistic camps during the “culture wars” that continue to this day.

In my view, CCCMB provided a unique niche during those troubled times. First, that niche was somewhere in the middle, between the extremes in the culture wars that were raging all around. The congregation clearly valued fairly traditional family relationships (e.g. None of us, as far as I know, supported the idea of “open marriage” that was being advocated by some, nor did many of us participate in burning either bras or Bank of America buildings.) but we also tried to treat controversial issues such as the role of women in family, church, and the professional world, divorce and remarriage, abortion, and homosexuality in more nuanced ways than was common in more hardline conservative circles, including many of our fellow members in the MB denomination. Political issues were not often on the official agenda at CCCMB, but informal conversations made it clear that “progressive” political positions were held by more CCCMB people than was common in most MB or other evangelical communities.

Second, the niche that was provided by CCCMB was attractive to certain types of persons. Most (but not quite all) of us shared a common Russian Mennonite ethnic background—but that was also true of many other MB congregations at the time. More importantly, I think, many (but, again, not all) of us at CCCMB were “products” of Mennonite institutions: Mennonite farm towns and local congregations, Mennonite high schools, colleges, and seminaries, and Mennonite mission or voluntary service agencies such as the Mennonite Central Committee and Mennonite mission agencies. Many of us also had experiences in other cultures, serving with mission groups, the MCC and the Peace Corps in

faraway places such as Africa, India, or Viet Nam, or with the military or the civilian alternative in Europe, Korea, or Denver, or, even, in graduate programs in exotic megalopolises such as Chicago and Los Angeles. It is almost a truism that once one has been truly “away,” one can never really go back “home” again. Some of our peers with whom we shared similar academic and cross-cultural experiences did not even try to return home, leaving entirely the churchly and ethnic communities of their childhood and youth, but CCCMB people did come back, and many of us found in the congregation a welcoming and supportive community of like-minded folks with whom we could comfortably share in worship, study, fellowship and service to others.

Third, the niche that CCCMB provided was especially attractive to many of the faculty, staff, and some of the students at FPC (now FPU) and the MB seminary in Fresno (MBBS, now Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary, FPBS), so, a significant portion of the membership at CCCMB had connections with the college or seminary. Not only were both the schools and the congregation intentionally shaped by the recently recovered “Anabaptist Vision” of Bender and Yoder et al, but at one time in the mid-1970s, I calculated that approximately one half of the active members of CCCMB were affiliated with Fresno Pacific and/or MBBS and a significant percentage of the members of the still small faculties of the two institutions were members at CCCMB. Many of the people who have recently served in leadership positions at CCCMB began to participate in the congregation during their years at Fresno Pacific, but most of them are now grandparents (or grandparent age) and it has been some time since any significant number of college age young people have been part of the CCCMB community. Many of the students who do show up have family connections in the congregation. It is quite clear that not many college-aged young people are attracted to what CCCMB has to offer these days.

Having said all of that about the niche that I think CCCMB has occupied through much of its history, we can return to what Putnam has to say about the decades of the 1990s and the first years of the new century. Putnam sees a second “aftershock” that is characterized by a turning away from some of what happened in the previous two decades. Young people, especially, rejected much of the religion that many churches had to offer and were simply walking away. Mainline Protestant churches continued a pattern of decline that had started in the 1960s. Latino Catholics continued their numerical increase because of immigration and high birth rates but Anglo Roman Catholic membership also declined. For a time it appeared that conservative evangelical churches had been growing because of defections from liberal churches, but later analyses indicated that actually few liberals migrated to conservative congregations. In fact, more liberals became Catholic than evangelical. In retrospect, it appears that

evangelical church growth happened primarily because their conservative view of women contributed to higher birth rates and they more effectively retained their young people. Church membership and attendance continue a pattern of decline in congregations of almost every kind, including the evangelicals—except, perhaps, some of the so-called “mega-churches.”

I am not aware of reports of similar numbers for the MBs, but the MCUSA lost about 19% of their members during the decade between 2002 and 2012 and substantial numbers have withdrawn since 2012, including Lancaster, previously the largest regional conference within the MCUSA. According to a recent report, before the “merger” of the MC and GC denominations into the MCUSA in 2002, membership in the two groups totaled around 133,000. MCUSA membership in 2018 was around 78,000, about 40% fewer than the earlier membership. These departures happened partly as fallout from their attempt to merge two denominations with different histories and cultures, but partly, too, because of divisive controversies over how to respond to women in pastoral leadership and LGBTQ issues. As is true of most other church communities, attendance patterns of the Mennonites who do remain in the MCUSA have also gone through a remarkable transition. In 1972, 44% of Mennonites reported that they attended church more often than once a week. In 2006, only 8% of members reported that they attended church this frequently. For the remaining members of the MCUSA, and for most of us, the religious compartment of contemporary social life has been reduced to just a few hours per week, even for the declining numbers of people who are church members, and growing numbers of people are simply dropping out entirely.

If the religious environment helped shape CCCMB in its early stages of development, it would be a big surprise if we did not see at least some of these recent changes in religion in America also reflected in what has happened at WAMC. Formal membership has remained fairly constant at about 180, but average Sunday morning attendance declined from a peak of about 170 in 2004 to approximately 100 in 2015 and since, a decline of about 40%.

Not only have the total number of persons involved in the life of the congregation declined, but the distribution of ages and generations within the congregation has changed as well. I am not aware of specific statistics on this, but during the early years in the history of CCCMB almost all of the members were from the younger age cohorts of the “Interwar Generation” (born in the years 1900-1945), so during the early decades (1963-1980) in the history of CCCMB, almost all of the members were in their 20s through 40s. So almost all of us were at similar points in the “family life cycle” and we were dealing with similar personal “identity crises” in the developmental “stages” described by Erik Erikson

and popularized by Gail Sheehy (in *Passages*). As members of the same “generation,” we shared a similar background of the social experiences that I am trying to describe in these memoirs. To list just a few of the dimensions of these shared experiences, almost all of us were raised on farms and in small towns by parents who had experienced one (or two) World Wars and had lived through the Great Depression. We lived much of our lives during the “American Century,” a period of, for the most part, economic security and expansion. Some of us were sent off to wars in Korea and Viet Nam, but those wars were far removed from the everyday lives of most of us Americans. We were raised in families and congregations that were deeply influenced by religious fundamentalism and political conservatism, so we knew what it was that we wanted to rebel against. These are just a few of the many social experiences that were shared by the generation of people who provided leadership and support for the life of the congregation through the first 40 or 50 years in the history of CCCMB.

A summary of the ages of respondents to a recent (March 2021) survey of the congregation makes clear just how dramatically the distribution of generations within WAMC has changed. Approximately 25.4% of the 59 respondents are from the “Interwar Generation,” a term used by Norris and Inlehart to describe persons born in the years 1900-1945. The current ages of this generation of people who founded and then dominated the leadership of the congregation during the early decades, born during the years 1925-1945, are between 75 and 95.

The “Baby Boomer” generation, born during the years 1946-1964, represent 40.7% of the respondents to the survey. More than 40% of respondents are in the ages 57 to 74. The social and cultural contexts for most persons in this generation were substantially different from those of us in the “Interwar Generation,” so it would be a big surprise if their values and ways of thinking did not differ substantially from their parent and grandparent generations. A total of two thirds (66.1%) of the respondents to the survey were born during the years between 1925 and 1964 (the “Interwar” and “Boomer” generations), so they now range in ages from 57 to 95. About one half (17%) of the remaining respondents belong to “Generation X” (born during the mid-1960s through the mid-1980s) and one half (15.3%) belong to the “Millennial Generation” born during the years from the mid-1980s through the end of the century. Only one respondent was 22 years old or younger, so just over one third (33.9%) of the respondents were 56 years old or younger. (A qualifying note concerning these numbers is that they represent persons who responded to a congregational survey. Perhaps an age profile of the people who attend regularly might look somewhat different.)

I have made no attempt to use “generation” as an important analytical device in these memoirs, but I will mention just four components in the life of the congregation that were once important but seem to receive different levels of support by persons from different age cohorts. First, since the earliest years in the history of CCCMB, the choir has been an important part of the worship services and the social fabric of the congregation. Few younger persons have joined the choir in recent decades. Pianos, organs, and four-part harmony do not seem to be much in vogue these days. Second, one of the innovative practices that the congregation adopted early in its history was the “Sermon Talk-Back” (more recently “Sermon Talk”), a session for follow-up conversations about the sermon and the Sunday morning worship service. Meeting with the preacher to discuss the sermon was unusual enough in the early days that Sermon Talk-Back was often mentioned as one of the “distinctives” that set CCCMB somewhat apart from other congregations, where analyzing and asking questions about a sermon seemed to be almost sacrilegious. Sermon Talk continues on at WAMC, but the participants are mostly those of us who are in our 70s and 80s, with virtually no one below the age of the Boomer Generation. Third, “potluck” meals once provided not only food, but also served as an important context for informal social interaction. Potlucks, too, seem to hold little attraction for younger folks. And, finally, few of us “dress up for church,” with suits and ties for men and fancy dresses (and, sometimes, hats) for women, as was once the common practice in congregations of many kinds. Shorts and sandals are “in,” formal is “out” of fashion. Generational differences like these might seem to be superficial, but my guess is that they are just “the tip of an iceberg.” Subcultures have changed with the changing generations.

As might be expected in an era of geographic and religious mobility, only a few of the many young people who have grown up in the congregation continue as active members. In recent years much of the leadership of the congregation has been provided by people who belong to the “boomer” generation that followed the founding generation, including long-time pastor Bill Braun and our daughter Connie and son-in-law Kevin Enns-Rempel, who served as moderator during the six years 2010 - 2015. Most of us in the founding generation have long since retired and several have passed away. Most of the recent members of the council and many of the others who continue to contribute their time and energy to church leadership are grandparents or they are grandparent age. Several of these leaders began their association with CCCMB many years ago, during their student years at Fresno Pacific.

In many ways, WAMC is still a congregation in the moderate middle, too liberal to attract folks who identify with the conservative extreme (e.g. a couple with “Tea Party” decals on their car attended for a while but they left to find a more conservative church where they would feel more comfortable) and

too conservative to appeal to people from the liberal pole (e.g. Several people left or changed their membership status during the congregation's struggles over membership for openly committed homosexuals because CCCMB was not "inclusive" enough.). Things do change, but at the moment there are declining numbers of people in the middle position that the congregation represents. The moderate middle is a lonely place to be in polarized America in the year 2021.

I have briefly summarized only a few of the points made by Putnam and Campbell—and theirs is only one of many such analyses. But I think enough has been said to indicate that an old world is passing away and something new is taking its place. This means that the CCCMB that was shaped by one generation under conditions in an earlier era will not look the same with a new generation of leaders in a new kind of social environment.

SOME CHANGES AND SOME CHOICES.

I will begin by describing some of the ways in which CCCMB attempted to be a congregation that provided an alternative to what was typical in other Mennonite Brethren, evangelical and Protestant congregations in our time and place. Many of the "distinctives" that set CCCMB somewhat apart were rooted in one particular understanding of the meaning of our Anabaptist-Mennonite spiritual heritage, but, as I suggested, CCCMB was also shaped by the many changes that were happening in the larger American social, cultural and religious environment. And some of the patterns of change at CCCMB reflect the difficulties that any organization encounters when it attempts to "dance to the beat of a different drummer." There is a lot of sociological literature on how radically non-conformist "sects" typically transition to more conventional "denominations" or "churches," so something like that is undoubtedly part of the dynamic at CCCMB, too. The comments that follow are organized around some of the transitions that I think have happened in the congregation in recent years.

1. Pursuing an "Anabaptist Vision." In my "map" of the theological options that were available in the religious environment around me, I provided a brief introduction to Anabaptism. Since its founding in 1963, CCCMB has defined its identity as being "Anabaptist." Of course there are various ways of understanding just what "Anabaptist" means, but, following sociologist Calvin Redekop, I described Anabaptism as a "utopian movement." I think that means that as an Anabaptist community, the congregation has attempted to express in its programs and practices a particular vision of what it means to be Christian. With Bender, Yoder and others, I suggested that the early Anabaptists sought to "restore" the church to what they thought it was intended to be by: (1) making *discipleship*, or seeking to follow the teachings and example of Jesus, central to what it means to be Christian; (2) constructing

a particular kind of alternative *community* of persons who work together to understand and live according to the Jesus way; and (3) following a shared ethic that emphasizes just and *peaceful relationships* with our fellow human beings, both within and beyond the boundaries of the Christian community. Anabaptists were willing to live in non-conformity to “what everybody else is doing” in order to act in conformity to what they understood, together, was God’s will for them as individuals and as communities.

For many of the members, CCCMB represented a deliberate attempt to implement one version of the Anabaptist vision in a 20th century urban context. Anabaptism, we thought, provided us with answers to the new questions for which the answers of the fundamentalism of our old world were no longer adequate. It provided us with a historical perspective that enabled us to maintain a sense of continuity with our cultural and religious heritage but without the legalism and narrowness of our small town and fundamentalist old worlds. It provided us with a version of the Christian faith that was still distinctive but was also more ecumenical and inclusive than what we had known at “home.” It enabled us to open the rigid cultural and religious boundaries that we had inherited but no longer found meaningful. Our shared understanding of the meaning of the Anabaptist vision was part of the “glue” that held us together as a Mennonite community of faith. In the words of historian Paul Toews, Anabaptism provided us with a history and a vision that were “useful.”

It is my impression that one of the important changes that has happened at CCCMB/WAMC in recent years is a diminished commitment to intentionally structure congregational life according to “the Anabaptist vision” of what the Christian life is all about. In recent years we have not spent a lot of time considering the implications of Anabaptist/Mennonite history for how we should live our lives in the present. As decisions have been made, we have not often heard “What can we learn about that from our Anabaptist-Mennonite heritage?” In what follows, I will describe several specific ways in which I think this change is evident. To the extent that it is appropriate to understand Anabaptism as a “utopian movement,” a weakened commitment to intentionally work together toward the realization of a particular vision represents a pretty fundamental change in identity, and that change is entirely consistent with what many observers have said about “postmodernity.” One of the characteristics of postmodernity is that there is little appetite for ideological or visionary thinking.

Of course, in the old world, vision was not something that people needed to worry about very much. Traditional orthodoxy prescribed what one should believe and traditional orthopraxis dictated how one should act. Questions about identity and mission arise when communities experience change and

encounter diversity, leading to the necessity of making choices about who one is and how one should act in this world, both individually and collectively. “Who am I?” and “What is my mission in this world?” are not easy questions for individuals to ask and answer, and they are even more complicated for a group of people to process together. Making group decisions about the identity and mission of a community of people takes a lot of time and energy, and it seems that this is something that fewer and fewer people are interested in doing, especially in our post-modern culture where ideological and “foundationalist” thinking seem to be in decline. In fact, scholars have been writing about “the end of ideology” since the 1960s so it would come as no surprise if a kind of vision fatigue sets in. Being utopian takes a lot of hard work and my impression is that fewer and fewer people in congregations, including WAMC, seem to be interested in doing that particular kind of work.

Most of us are involved in bureaucratic organizations so we know something about what is involved in the process of “strategic planning.” In institutions (including FPU) that have more fully transitioned from the old world to the new, defining an institutional vision and then organizing resources to implement that vision involves this highly rational and very modern planning process. Among other things, strategic planning includes articulating a concise statement of institutional identity and mission. A strategic plan builds on the history of the institution to specify a limited number of general goals that the institution intends to work toward in the next stages of its development. The process also includes making an assessment of the environment, both locally and more broadly, to identify both resources and obstacles within the institution and in the environment that might help (or hinder) the organization in accomplishing its goals. It often works most effectively with assistance from an expert “consultant” from outside the group. Since one of the important desired outcomes of the planning process is the creation of a broadly shared consensus within the organization, a strategic planning process requires extensive participation on the part of the members in a variety of larger and smaller group settings, so it takes a lot of time and energy, spread over a period of months, or even years. Not many people engage in a strategic planning process just because it is fun.

During my brief six months in the pastor’s office during the summer and fall of 2007, one of the questions that associate pastor, Mary Anne Isaak, the council, staff, and others discussed was whether it might be timely to engage in a serious congregational strategic planning process. My opinion was that a strategic planning process would be too costly in time and energy for the congregation to bear at that time. The congregation had just completed an exhausting two-year process of dealing with issues related to same-sex relationships and I did not think the congregation would be interested in another

long process of talking about identity and mission (“navel-gazing” some called it). My impression was that the congregation was basically healthy enough. Attendance, participation and the budget were generally stable. We were not aware of any serious schisms within the group. I did not think there was much point in investing our time and energy to create a strategic plan. There were other smaller scale organizational adjustments that we should be working on instead, I thought.

My opinion changed completely when, in 2009, the council initiated renewed conversations about a major building program. Now the congregation was talking about some really big changes. I could not imagine that early in the 21st century a formal organization (a congregation is that, among other things) would initiate an expensive and exhausting building program that would hugely shape the future of the congregation without first engaging in some form of strategic planning process that would involve serious conversations about congregational identity, mission and goals for the future. Only when the congregation had developed a significant level of consensus about these matters, I thought, would it make sense to decide what kinds of facilities would be most helpful in expressing congregational identity and in moving toward the fulfilment of the mission of the congregation. So I was disappointed when plans for new facilities were developed without the prior planning process that I thought was so important.

On July 22, 2015 the council distributed a letter to the congregation announcing that the leaders would “develop a plan to help us move forward” toward a building program. Included in a list of the “elements” of such a plan is the following:

Who are we as a church? What is our mission as we move forward? We see the answer coming less in typical strategic planning documents and mission statements and more from creating a sense of shared direction.

Of course clarifying institutional identity and mission and creating “a sense of shared direction” are precisely the goals that a strategic planning process is designed to accomplish, but the council chose not to take advantage of the wisdom that some version of a systematic strategic planning process might have to offer.

The strategic planning process does belong to our new world, so perhaps it is understandable that churches show some reluctance to adopt these new techniques. It might be well to remember that some Mennonites once resisted keeping minutes of meetings and careful financial records because this seemed to call into question the spiritual authority of the leaders. Recording minutes of meetings, careful bookkeeping, and the use of computers also belong to our new world, but it is pretty much taken

for granted by now that they can contribute to the health of a congregation. The strategic planning process can similarly be a helpful mechanism for making sure that practical decisions remain linked to the history of an organization, to its vision for the future, to a realistic appraisal of resources and obstacles, both internally and in its environment, and that there is a broadly shared “consensus” within the group on these matters.

One of the questions that should be addressed is the source of the vision that will help shape the identity and mission that the congregation intends to pursue in the next stages of its development. Earlier in the history of CCCMB, one particular understanding of the “Anabaptist vision” was studied, discussed and intentionally institutionalized in several ways, some of which I will describe in what follows. Will this history of intentionally working toward implementation of an “Anabaptist vision” be carried forward into the future at WAMC? If so, what version of the Anabaptist vision will the congregation pursue? What will it mean for WAMC to be “Anabaptist” in the decades that lie ahead? And if not Anabaptism, what other sources will be used in shaping the congregation’s vision for the future? As I mentioned in my summary of Anabaptism in Part Three above, FPU theology professor and current lay leader in the WAMC, has recently (2020) helped edit a book with the title *Recovering From the Anabaptist Vision*, so none of this can be taken for granted.

2. Architecture. Probably the first thing that would strike a newcomer to CCCMB during the first fifty years of its history was the architecture. The sanctuary was built “in the round,” with a flat floor and no elevated pulpit. **Photo #41** shows the sanctuary set up for a wedding reception. Since chairs were arranged in a semi-circle for worship services, to some extent at least people faced one another during worship services, rather than “looking at the back of people’s heads,” though some of that is inevitable. In the center of the circle was a communion table on which various symbols were placed as appropriate to the liturgical calendar and worship themes. The translucent dome in the ceiling above the table in the center of the sanctuary served as a source of natural light and it was also intended to serve as a symbol of the resurrection. All of this was negotiated (with some difficulty, we were told) with the architect in order to make a series of very intentional statements: The congregation would be a relatively non-hierarchical, egalitarian community of people in face-to-face relationships with one another. In keeping with biblical emphases on “community” and the New Testament notion of “the priesthood of all believers,” leaders are part of the community, with specific assignments and responsibilities, but they are not elevated to a higher position in a “top-down” hierarchical order, neither physically high up on a platform nor in a higher status above the others. It is the communion table

rather than the pulpit and sermon that is the center of the sanctuary and the community. The voluntary nature of Christian faith and the importance of commitment to the community are represented by the baptistery in the "front" of the sanctuary. In these and other ways the shape of the building was intentionally designed to express a particular Anabaptist theological vision rather than to simply replicate what was common in most other Protestant church architecture, though we need to acknowledge the fact that CCCMB was not really all that unique in moving toward doing "church in the round." At about that same time, other congregations of various kinds were constructing sanctuaries that were similarly shaped.

The sanctuary was designed for a small congregation. The domed ceiling extended only over the center section of the room, which seated 80 or so, and sliding (and disappearing) dividers were available to partition the rear section of the room into separate classroom spaces. Since the domed ceiling did not extend over the outer classroom spaces, the ceiling in the outer part of the room was low and flat, resulting in quite different experiences for people in different sections of the sanctuary, depending on whether they were under the central domed part of the room or under the lower, flat ceiling outside the inner circle. As many as 220 people have squeezed into the sanctuary on a couple of occasions, though that is too crowded for safety or comfort and is undoubtedly far more than the local fire codes would allow.

The CCCMB campus was originally ten acres in size, but a commitment to remain a relatively small congregation was solidified when part of the property was sold to the city of Clovis for use as a city park. Some old drawings indicate that there was once an intension that a separate, larger sanctuary might be built at some time in the future, so recent plans for building new church facilities were presented as an attempt to "complete" an earlier vision for a different, larger sanctuary, but since the new sanctuary is designed to seat a maximum of only about 300 persons, there was still no thought that the church might one day be substantially larger than it was in the past. CCCMB had no thought of ever becoming a "mega-church."

The recently constructed sanctuary proclaims a somewhat different kind of vision (**Photo #42**). The sanctuary is generally rectangular, with the congregation mostly facing forward toward two pulpits up on an elevated platform. The rows of chairs are arranged in somewhat of a semi-circle and it is still possible to move the chairs into other configurations, but the old Anabaptist-inspired symbolism of doing church in-the-round is largely gone. The new sanctuary eloquently reflects some of the symbols that Christians have always held dear (i.e. "light"). A report that appeared in the MB periodical, *The*

Christian Leader and was re-printed in the inter-Mennonite periodical *Mennonite World Review* (recently renamed *Anabaptist World Review*) indicates some of what the new facilities represent:

(The design) reflects appreciation of the arts and an expansive vision for the future... The new building is theologically focused on letting light in and sending it back out. It features high ceilings and windows that allow natural light, as opposed to the low-ceilinged old space that was small, round and windowless. Acoustics are more suited for congregational singing and live performances. A wall that separated the church from the neighborhood was replaced with an open wrought-iron fence.

The architect and the building committee were more than successful in achieving these goals. In fact, the San Joaquin Chapter of the American Institute of Architecture awarded Architect Paul Halajian the 2016 Design Award for Civic Design for his work on the WAMC sanctuary. The sanctuary is indeed spectacular! It eloquently reflects “an appreciation of the arts,” but just as the physical light that is undoubtedly the central feature in the new architecture can be of varied types, spiritual light can have various meanings, too. As far as I know, what spiritual light will mean at WAMC remains to be clarified. At least I do not recall any serious discussion of the spiritual meaning of the “light” that is central to the architectural design, but maybe I just missed it.

So church architecture is more than just a matter of aesthetics, though it is surely that, too. Buildings express theological convictions and they shape religious experiences. Of course it is possible for a congregation to be a “square church meeting in a round building,” and it is also possible to construct Anabaptist community in a rectangular building, since that has been the physical shape of most meeting houses throughout the history of the Mennonites, but architecture can also be one means for making a particular theological vision concrete (pun intended). Going from round to square reflects a shift in theological emphases.

3. Organization. The congregation also attempted, with varying degrees of support and success, to express its Anabaptist-Mennonite identity in its organizational structures. Attempts were made to utilize extensive “lay leadership” in a “team ministry” with the “pastor” (sometimes with the title “Minister of the Word”) serving alongside the lay “moderator” (chair of the council and congregation), “church council” (the board of “elders” charged with general oversight of the spiritual condition and direction of the congregation), and the chairs of the various commissions who were also sometimes called “ministers.” Former moderator Wilfred Martens once diagrammed the leadership structure of the congregation not as a hierarchical pyramid as in a typical bureaucratic organization with the pastor at the top like a CEO, but as separate functional positions along a horizontal line of equals, each with

specific areas of leadership responsibilities, but without a hierarchy of functions and with no one person in charge of everything.

The concept of lay leadership was expressed in several ways. I have mentioned that the floor in the old sanctuary was flat (though a low platform was added later to improve lines of vision and acoustics) as a way of expressing the egalitarian ideal of “the priesthood of all believers.” Every member has gifts (besides just money) to contribute and should be a “priest” or “minister” to others in one way or another.

Commissions carried major responsibilities for the various functions that the congregation defined as necessary to the health of a Christian community. Initially there were five commissions, each charged with providing leadership in one of the functions that were deemed to be essential to the nature of a Christian congregation: education, evangelism, fellowship, stewardship, and worship. Early on, a pastoral care commission was added to provide support for members who were experiencing personal or family crises, and at some point evangelism was combined with Christian service to form an outreach commission. Commission membership sometimes included married couples. Terms for commission members were normally two years.

This organizational structure was based on the widely held expectation that each member of the congregation would serve the congregation in some way: as a member of a commission, or teacher, or member of the choir, or transporting dependent members, or preparing coffee, or something! Since service to the congregation was considered to be one dimension of “stewardship” (along with financial support of the church budget), the stewardship commission served as a kind of nominating committee, inviting members to volunteer or suggest the names of others to fill the various offices and positions in the congregation’s commissions, committees, programs, and activities. The stewardship commission then presented to the congregation their slate of persons that they felt represented the best match of personal gifts with congregational needs. For a time, as part of this process, some of the geographic “parish groups” (including the Kerckhoff and Sunnyside parishes in which we participated) held annual “discernment” meetings during which each member indicated what kind of service he or she intended to contribute to the congregation during the coming year—or provided an explanation for why the person would not be able to serve during that year (e.g. I declared myself unavailable for church service during the year I was trying to complete my dissertation, and our discernment group confirmed me in this decision.). Of course all of this took a lot of time and sometimes resulted in some hurt feelings, but it did represent one way to carry forward our Anabaptist understanding that the church is a community

of participating and contributing members. Members are expected to help *produce*, not simply pay for and *consume* what the church has to offer.

Needless to say, this level of lay participation in church leadership requires the commitment of a lot of time and energy, so one means to reduce the heavy work load is to hire a “pastor” to provide professional leadership for the congregation. Waldo Hiebert served as the first interim pastor at CCCMB, and then the congregation called Werner Kroeker to serve as the first full time pastor. Of course having a full time pastor requires considerable adjustment to an organizational structure that is committed, in theory at least, to lay leadership. “Team ministry” is a term that was used to describe a leadership structure that included both volunteer and paid leadership, but there were on-going tensions and misunderstandings concerning who was responsible for what. Members found it difficult to know which person to call and there was often confusion over “Who is in charge here?” Since the moderator chaired both the council and the congregation, in many ways that is “where the buck stopped,” but some confusion remained. Nevertheless, when Werner Kroeker completed his term as pastor, he is reported to have advised the congregation not to replace him with a full-time pastor, which he thought to be incompatible with the congregation’s version of lay leadership in the Anabaptist tradition. But the congregation was not so committed to lay leadership that it followed Werner’s advice.

Significant adjustments in the meaning of “team ministry” were made in 1993 and again in 2012, both in the direction of greater reliance on professional leadership. During the early years of the decade of the 1990s, it became increasingly clear that members were finding it difficult to sustain the level of work that the leadership structures called for. One solution, some of us thought, might be to narrow the focus and reduce the size of each commission, so many of the commissions were divided into two. The Christian education commission, for example, was divided into a *children’s* Christian education committee and an *adult* Christian education committee, since the agenda for the education of children and adults are really quite different. And, as a second example, since the pastoral care commission was often fully occupied with providing support for individuals and families who were facing immediate crisis situations, a supportive care commission was added to focus on providing assistance to individuals and families who were caring for persons with long-term needs such as developmentally disabled family members or dependent elderly parents or spouses. To provide further support for all of these commissions and to deal with the issues of communication and coordination that would surely arise, pastoral time was increased from 1.5 to 1.75 FTE. A pastor was assigned to each commission to provide support and assistance but not necessarily to be “in charge.” Theoretically at least, the leaders

of the commissions were the lay “ministers” who carried primary responsibility for making sure that the work of the commissions was done. Pastors and other paid staff were there to help.

All of this seemed to make sense to some of us as one way of continuing to be Anabaptist in our organizational structures, but not everyone was convinced. Since I was a member of the council at the time, I was called aside one Sunday morning after the worship service by MB patriarch, Rev. J. B. Toews, who was a member of the congregation. In his own inimitable and intimidating manner that many of us remember all too well, he wagged his index finger at me and said something like “Bruder (brother) Enns, what you are doing is a grave mistake. Increasing paid pastoral time will change the nature of the congregation from an Anabaptist community of participating and contributing members to a typical Protestant gathering of mere spectators.” “Brother Toews,” I responded, “our intention is the exact opposite of that. We are intending that pastoral support will *increase*, not *decrease* lay participation. We are trying to invite more people to contribute, but with a narrower focus and fewer demands on their time and energy. We hope the increased pastoral time will facilitate, not subvert that.” I think now that J. B. was probably correct in his prediction of what the future would look like, but for reasons other than just the specific adjustments we made in the 1990s.

As is typical in medium-sized congregations such as CCCMB, the congregation became increasingly “pastor-centered.” I discovered the extent to which this was true when I occupied the pastor's office (one quarter time) for six months in 2007 while pastor Bill Braun was on leave-of-absence. During my initial period of orientation, I found that the most frequent response to my many questions about how things worked at the church was: “Pastor Bill takes care of that.” Who makes sure that broken sprinklers or AC units get fixed? Who can find financial information in the church's complicated computer system? Who keeps track of which hymns have been sung recently? Who is expected to preach with some frequency--and to be in charge of special events like baptisms, weddings, and funerals? The answer to these and many other similar questions was consistently the same: “Pastor Bill does that.”

This widespread concentration of leadership in the office of the pastor happens partly by default. The time, money and energy that members are willing to commit to their congregation are in decline in many congregations in many denominations across the country, and so, by default, the pastor assumes responsibility for more and more functions in the life of the church. After all, the pastor is likely to be present in the church office much of the time, is salaried, and is the person whose job security and reputation will suffer most if things are not going well. And also, pastors in smaller or mid-sized

congregations such as CCCMB are not usually specialists with clearly bounded professional job descriptions. The unspoken job description for a pastor, as for other roles and relationships that are traditional and “diffuse,” such as “wife,” or “mother,” or “friend,” rather than rationally and contractually defined is often something like “Do whatever is required and work as long as it takes to get the job done.” As an old saying goes, “A woman’s work is never done,” so it is with the work of a pastor. It is also my impression that many pastors enjoy and find personal fulfilment in being “in charge.” In fact, it is my impression that pastors are often resistant to the carefully defined job descriptions and the rigorous evaluations of performances that are an integral part of our bureaucratically organized new world. In many ways, the diffuse role of “pastor” is a remnant of the old world where many expectations were left unspoken or were only loosely defined, leaving many things to the discretion of the person who holds the position. The word “pastor” means “shepherd,” so it is rooted in an old pastoral (herding animals) social and economic world that is very remote from our own urban social context. It is one of the several venerable terms for church leaders that were used in the New Testament and down through the centuries of church history, so it carries with it many positive connotations, but there is nothing uniquely sacred about it and the word can carry many different meanings that can result in vague and sometimes conflicting expectations. I suspect that the ill-defined and unbounded expectations attached to the title, “pastor,” contribute to the growing problem of pastoral “burnout.”

Some steps were taken during and shortly after my brief part-time tenure in the pastor’s office to create a more clearly defined division of labor between the two pastors and to initiate more rigorous procedures for evaluation of pastoral performances than had been the case previously. Consideration was given to returning to the use of more specific and descriptive terms that had been used at CCCMB previously, such as “minister of the word,” and, perhaps another term such as “minister of spiritual and community development” (A “minister of administration” might complete a team of three “ministers,” I suggested.) instead of the more traditional but less concretely descriptive term of “pastor” and “associate pastor” but not much came of that. The church seems to be a place where some of the old world ways of doing things continue on, for better and for worse.

On several occasions following pastoral changes, the congregation has functioned temporarily without a fulltime “pastor.” Leadership responsibilities were divided among a small leadership group that sometimes included members who were paid part time. A small administrative group met frequently to make sure that all of the necessary tasks were adequately taken care of and coordinated. Arrangements like these have always been considered to be temporary, but, as I said, Werner Kroeker

once suggested that this alternative way of organizing church leadership fits nicely with the Anabaptist vision and a full-time pastor is not really necessary. Some of us agreed that CCCMB should give this model a serious try, but the pressures to hire a “pastor” are strong, so there has never been much support for this kind of organizational non-conformity to what everybody else is doing.

It should be noted that just as most Mennonite congregations met in square, not round buildings, most Mennonite congregations and denominations also utilized hierarchical, not “flat,” leadership structures. Salaried pastoral leadership did not begin in MB circles until around the time of World War II but that did not mean that lay leadership was not hierarchical. And the (“Old”) Mennonite Church, for many years the largest of the several Mennonite denominations, had a system of “Bishops” who had some degree of authority over local congregations. In both architecture and organizational structures, CCCMB was an “outlier,” even within the larger Anabaptist-Mennonite community.

The congregation and/or the council have recently made a series of decisions about congregational leadership and organization. One decision was whether to search for a traditional full-time “pastor” who would take the initiative in providing assertive leadership for the congregation, a kind of CEO approach to church leadership. An alternative approach might have been to appoint a series of part-time “ministers,” each with expertise in a specific area, a descriptive title (e.g. minister of the word rather than the generic term “pastor”) and a “portfolio” of assignments—a “team” approach to congregational leadership. Voices were heard in support of each of these alternative approaches to congregational organization and leadership. This might have been another occasion when a systematic long-range strategic planning process might have been helpful but the council appointed a small “pastoral search committee.” The process ended with an essentially unanimous (with one dissenting vote, I was told) decision to call Audrey Hindes as fulltime lead pastor. Discussions about alternative models of church leadership were over.

This leads me to another transition that I think has happened at CCCMB/WAMC in recent years.

4. Decision-making. In addition to extensive lay participation in congregational leadership, another part of the early organizational vision at CCCMB was that, insofar as possible, major decisions should be made by “consensus” rather than by mandate from the “top” as in a typical business enterprise, or by simple majority, or even super-majority vote as in a democratic organization. In the case of major decisions concerning congregational leadership, identity and mission, the goal was to reach a consensus that was widely shared by the entire membership—or at least as many as possible. A commitment to

decision-making by consensus means that voices of opposition will be taken so seriously that big changes will not be made until agreement (or at least not active opposition) will be shared by all (or, at least almost all) of the members. It will recognize that few decisions can be reduced to a simple binary choice of yes/no. As a minimum, an option of “abstain” will be offered, and some effort will be made to understand the reasons for no and abstain votes. Persons in opposition will be given a “voice,” and those voices will be taken seriously. Of course this kind of decision-making moves slowly, is not very efficient, and it looks nothing at all like decision-making in the other mostly bureaucratic organizations with which most of us are familiar, but it also offers at least some hope that there will be a strong base of support for decisions once they have been made. Inviting widespread participation in discussing and deciding major issues is one part of what we thought it means to be an Anabaptist community.

A dramatic example of decision-making by consensus happened in the Neyagawa MB church in Japan in the 1980s. Pastor Sugi reported that even though 80% of the congregation supported a proposal to assume a loan in order to build new facilities, he did not feel that it was right to proceed when 20% of the members were still opposed, so he suggested that the project be delayed until the level of support increased. One year later 100% of the members supported the project and the congregation had gathered enough money that a building loan was not necessary. But that was in a Japanese cultural context where social harmony was still highly valued and it was still important to avoid open confrontation and conflict if at all possible.

Something like that happened on several occasions in the early history of CCCMB and still does from time to time. After a process of discussion, the design of the original sanctuary-in-the-round was affirmed by consensus. One of several difficult issues that were faced by the congregation during its early years was whether to extend forgiveness to and continued membership for a divorced couple, something for which there was no precedent in the MB denomination at that time. The congregation voted unanimously to do so. Similarly, the congregation voted unanimously to accept non-immersed persons into membership shortly after the denomination permitted this as an option. Decisions to invite Werner Kroeker, and, more recently, Chuck Buller to serve as pastor were also unanimous, as was the even more recent decision to call Audrey Hindes as pastor. Of course many other decisions were made by majority votes, so the congregation has never been strictly wedded to making all decisions by consensus, and, as shown in the brief tenure of Chuck Buller as pastor, even unanimous agreement is no guarantee that everything will go well.

A difficult and controversial issue to which the congregation attempted to formulate a response over a nearly two-year period, 2004-2005, was the question of church membership for a person in a committed same-sex relationship. A number of CCCMB members quickly concluded that, of course, a request for continuing membership should be denied because there are texts in both the Old and New Testaments that forbid homosexual practices; homosexual practices have been prohibited through almost the entire history of almost all Christian communities almost everywhere in the world; and this level of inclusion is in violation of the U.S. MB confession of faith. Others were equally quick to conclude that, of course, the request should be granted because love and mutual acceptance and support are foundational to all biblical ethics; the meanings and connotations of the few biblical texts that deal with homosexuality are not really as clear as they appear to be on the surface; and the CCCMB mission statement states that CCCMB is an "inclusive" congregation, though the meaning of inclusive was not clearly defined. In the hope that some kind of congregation-wide consensus could be developed, the church council initiated a process of study and conversation that included reading materials, presentations in Christian education classes, and numerous small and large group discussions.

An early matter to be decided was whether the congregation was committed to continued membership in the MB denomination. If not, then the MB confession of faith, which limits marriage to "one man and one woman for life," was not really relevant. Leaving the denomination would not be a simple matter, but that is not what most people at CCCMB wanted to do at that time. Nevertheless, there was a real possibility that the denomination might decide that CCCMB was out of compliance with denominational policies and revoke our membership in the denomination, which might even mean that ownership of church properties would revert back to the MB conference. Things looked so bleak for a while that I wondered whether the 2005 traditional Christmas Eve service at CCCMB might be the last. There seemed to be a reasonably good chance that there might not be a CCCMB by the end of the next year.

Several specific incidents in this process stand out in my memory. First, FPU philosopher Delbert Wiens explained in a lecture during the adult education hour why he thinks the traditional interpretation of the few biblical texts that relate to homosexuality is based on a series of misunderstandings and misinterpretations, and he argued, therefore, against a categorical rejection of all same-sex relationships. These ancient texts are about exploitive and abusive sexual relationships as practiced in the patriarchal Greek and Roman societies and not about committed and loving same-sex relationships as we know them today. Then MBBS professor Jon Isaak explained why he thinks the traditional interpretations

are generally correct and why the Christian church should not give its blessing to homosexual practices. Tim Geddert, also an MBBS faculty member, shared (during a discussion in one of our local parish meetings) his own conclusion that Delbert and Jon shared the same "high" view of the importance of the biblical texts; they followed similar principles of interpretation (hermeneutics) of those texts; and yet they reached opposite conclusions about the practical implications of the texts. Which meant, Tim concluded, that we needed to be very cautious and humble in whatever decisions were made.

The issue was finally resolved (temporarily at least) when the church council, the group at CCCMB that was formally responsible for matters related to church membership since there are often complexities and a need for privacy, decided (with the lesbian member's agreement) to change her status from full member to associate member, a membership category created many years earlier for persons who are in general agreement with the MB confession of faith and desire membership in the CCCMB community but hold reservations or have disagreements with some specific parts of the denominational statement. A few members withdrew their membership because they disagreed with this decision by the council, some because the position of the council was too inclusive, others because it was not inclusive enough. Several others changed their status to associate member in solidarity with the lesbian member and because they, too, had some disagreements with specific parts of the MB confession of faith. At the end of the long process, the CCCMB church council and several other members of the congregation met with the Board of Faith and Life of the Pacific District Conference of MB Churches, the body charged with deciding matters such as this, and they seemed to affirm the process and the final outcome.

The whole long process was very difficult, consumed a lot of time and energy over a period of two years, contributed to a loss of members and a decline in attendance from about 170 in 2004 to about 150 in 2006, and it left many in the congregation in a state of exhaustion. But, still, the outcome was more positive than many congregations and denominations are able to accomplish when they confront these contentious issues (something that the larger MB denomination still seems unwilling or unable to do). I think the process was a fine model of what a community of people needs to do when they are required to make a decision about an issue that is both important and difficult. A final congregation-wide consensus was never really reached, but participation was open, broad-based and inclusive and the formal decision-making processes of both the congregation and the denomination to which it belonged were respected. Hopefully, no congregation will have to go through a difficult process like that very often.

But issues related to the place of LGBTQIA+ in the Christian church remain contentious and divisive. They refuse to just go away. For example, I have mentioned that the MCUSA has lost more than 40% of its membership and disagreement over these issues over a period of more than 15 years was certainly a major factor in the many divisions and departures of individuals, congregations, and entire conferences. The United Methodist Church, to cite but one more example, has been engaged in a multi-year struggle to find a way to resolve disagreements over the place of LGBTQ people in the church but has been unable to do so. They are currently moving toward division into separate denominational organizations and are trying to find a way to maintain their many institutions as what was one denominational body becomes two.

Since the end of that long and difficult process at CCCMB, it seems to me that the council has more often taken a more assertive role in making important decisions that significantly impact the life of the congregation. I will provide brief accounts of some recent decisions that indicate, to me at least, that the council has been taking a more familiar, more rational, and more efficient approach to leadership, giving lower priority to consensus as a goal in congregational decision-making.

First, the decision to build new facilities. Attendance in worship services reached its apex during the year 2004 when attendance averaged nearly 170, a number that was far too high for either comfort or compliance with local fire regulations, so the congregation voted (with 84% approval) to begin a process that would lead to new, larger facilities. But by 2006 when the congregation completed its processing of issues related to membership for a married lesbian, attendance had declined to about 150 and that number continued its downward trend, so that in 2008 the congregation voted to rescind its decision to construct new facilities, change from one worship service to two to alleviate crowding, and explore options for upgrading the existing buildings. But in 2009 the council appointed a building committee to provide leadership for a revived effort to build new facilities. During the next several months the congregation was invited to respond to reports and recommendations from the council and building committee, but, as far as I can recall, there was not a serious congregation-wide strategic planning process that addressed the question of whether to build or not. A final decision to accept the recommendation of the council and building committee to construct a new sanctuary and a new social hall, to remodel some of the existing buildings and to rework the parking area, plus some other smaller projects for a cost of \$2.5 million was reached with 63 yes votes, 12 no votes, and six written abstentions, reaching the previously set threshold of 80% yes votes of the total yes/no votes that were cast. Neither the written abstentions nor the silence of the approximately 100 members who did not

vote at all were taken into account in the final decision. Setting a boundary (i.e. 80% of yes/no votes) and accepting that as a final decision (even though the recommendation would have been rejected if just one of the yes votes had been no instead) is certainly one legitimate means of decision-making and this approach to decision-making seemed to be acceptable to many (most?) of the members of the congregation, but it indicated, to me at least, that working toward an inclusive, congregation-wide consensus was no longer a goal.

Another indicator of support for the building program was whether the positive vote would be confirmed by financial pledges and actual contributions (“voting with our pocketbooks”). The level of financial support was mostly very positive. A total of approximately \$1.4 million were contributed or pledged, and almost all of the pledged support was actually received. Since there were approximately 85 active “giving unit” households (single person, couple, or family residential units) active in the congregation, contributions and pledges in support of the building program averaged approximately \$16,500 per household, and these were contributions above the annual congregational budget that totaled nearly \$500,000 (including annual payments of approximately \$100,000 on the loan for the building project), an average of about \$5000 per household. As I said, many CCCMB members were extremely generous in sharing their financial resources and financial support for the building program indicated that there was, indeed, widespread support for the decision to build new facilities.

Another example of more decisive (and more efficient) council leadership in decision-making is related to inviting (calling) pastoral leadership. The council recently (May 2021) recommended the appointment of a 3/4 time associate pastor. The threshold for acceptance of this recommendation was 2/3 yes votes of yes/no votes cast, the same yes/no ratio that was used in calling two part-time associate pastors in 2012. This means that the council was prepared to invite a pastor to serve in spite of the expressed opposition of one third of the persons who cast their votes and made no provision for consideration of members who explicitly abstained or did not contribute to the decision-making process at all. This is a democratic and efficient way to reach an important decision, but it does not aspire to reaching a consensus, and it is a lower bar for issuing a pastoral call than has been set in many congregations in our religious tradition. Fortunately, the congregation will not have to deal with a pastoral situation in which there is this level of opposition since there was a unanimous 60 vote affirmation of the proposal.

I will briefly introduce one more current example of the church council exercising assertive leadership. On May 24, 2021, members received an announcement from the WAMC church council that the

council is recommending that the congregation declare itself to be fully accepting of persons in same-sex marital relationships into membership, including access to all leadership and pastoral roles. The council's "desired outcomes" are made clear: **"We resolve to welcome, accept, and affirm LGBTQIA+ people without reservation,** regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, where all are equally eligible for membership, baptism, marriage, volunteer service, employment and pastoral ministry." (Emphasis is the council's.) In a concluding paragraph, the council "reiterates" that it believes that "it is time for us to include all persons regardless of sexual orientation." The council invites members to gather in a series of small group discussions, but the purpose of the small group conversations is that members can "tell us what you think is necessary for us at Willow Avenue Mennonite Church to include all." The "desired outcome," it appears, is congregational support for the council's position, which calls for "full inclusion," a position that would be in clear violation of the official policies of the denomination to which we currently belong.

Of course the council recognizes that "The conversation and the process themselves will be challenging" and expresses the hope that we "will not lose any who belong to our community." But realizing this hope has proven to be an elusive goal for practically every congregation or denomination that has chosen to address this extremely polarizing issue. As I mentioned, the United Methodist Church has been engaged in a multi-year process that was intended to find a way to remain together in one denominational organization in spite of disagreements over the place of members and pastors who were in same-sex marriages, but they have not been able to find a way to accomplish this. And, again, the MCUSA, a sister denomination of the MBs, lost more than 40% of their members during the approximately 15 years since the formation of the MCUSA. MCUSA leadership spent several years encouraging a posture of "forbearance" that would allow for congregations and conferences to remain together in mutual respect and cooperation in spite of differences in convictions and practices related to LGBTQ issues, but conflicts and departures have continued with no clear path to resolution in sight. The May 28, 2021 issue of *Anabaptist World Review* reports that after years of struggling to find a way to stay together, the 3000 members and 35 congregations of the South Central area conference of the MCUSA remain hopelessly divided. The leadership of the area conference is recommending, therefore, that the conference, should cease to exist. Individual congregations could then choose to affiliate with another conference in the MCUSA or some other denomination with whom they were more compatible, or to simply remain independent.

As far as I know, there have been no recent formal public conversations concerning the place of LGBTQ people in the MB denomination in the U.S. In the Canadian conference of MB churches, 517 people from more than 40 congregations submitted a petition to their conference leaders requesting that a study conference be convened to begin a national “family conversation” about LGBTQ issues. A survey indicated that 88% of Canadian MB churches want to “talk about engaging the LGBTQ community,” but the leadership of the Canadian MB conference rejected the request for a national meeting. In May, 2021, the British Columbia conference of MB churches accepted a request from the Artisan MB congregation in Vancouver to “withdraw” from the BC provincial conference because Artisan’s acceptance of members in same-sex marriage is out of compliance with MB policies. The BC conference accepted the request of the congregation to withdraw. These are contentious and divisive issues in congregations and denominations both near and far. (Note: These comments are based on reports in the *Anabaptist World Review*, May 28, 2021.)

Motivations for leaving (or remaining in) a congregation or denomination are always complex, but the decline in average attendance in worship services at CCCMB from 170 to 150 during the years 2004-2006 was surely related in part, at least, to the congregation’s struggles with questions concerning the place of LGBTQ members who were in committed same-sex relationships. It is hard to imagine that WAMC will be able to resolve the tensions between those who view full inclusion as a matter of Christian love and justice and those who see inclusion as a violation of biblical injunctions and the convictions and practices of virtually all churches throughout the entire history of the global Christian community. The matter is made even more complex by the fact that adopting the council position will almost certainly result in separation from the MB conferences of which WAMC is currently a member. For some members of the WAMC congregation, relationships with the denomination have little or no meaning at all, but for others of us, this would mean the end of life-long (and generations-long) love-hate conversations and relationships with our historic ethno-religious community. Our denomination, some of us have thought, needs to hear our often dissenting (and sometimes prophetic) voice. A related complication is the fact that several members of WAMC are employed as professors and administrators in Fresno Pacific University. Their positions and tenure in the university might well be in jeopardy if their home congregation clearly positions itself as being out of compliance with the position of the denomination that sponsors the university. Unlike other divisive issues (e.g. There are large MB conferences including Canada, Congo, and India that are fully accepting of women in all pastoral leadership roles while MB leadership in the U.S. continues to maintain a restrictive stance.), I am aware

of no MB conference anywhere in the world that permits the inclusive position that the WAMC council has recommended.

So the WAMC church council has chosen to position itself on one side these polarizing controversies and has initiated a process that is intended to enlist the support of the congregation for this position. It is hard for a person like me, who has often been accused of being a “pessimist,” to imagine that there will not be at least some loss of members in spite of the good intentions of the church council. Of course there might well be losses even if the council says or does nothing. The ranks of the nones and the dones are filled with people who are disconnected from church life because of the closed and homophobic convictions and practices of too many church communities, including the Mennonite Brethren. One can only hope that any loss of membership that does result from the council’s proposed action will be more than offset by new members who will find a new church home in a more inclusive WAMC.

As is true of many part of these memoirs, I am writing this account in the middle, not at the end of the story. What remains to be told is what happens next as members of the WAMC congregation respond to the recommendation of the church council. Perhaps there will be “kick-back” for some of the reasons that I have listed here, or for other reasons. Or perhaps there will be widespread acceptance of the recommendation. After all, it is not easy to resist the strong recommendations of good friends who have been delegated the task of providing leadership for the community. And it seems to me that there is presently little patience among the members of many congregations for the slow and often difficult processes that are necessary for decision-making by consensus. Centralized and “majority-rules” decision-making seem to be good enough, as is the case in most institutions in the world around us, including many of our sister Mennonite congregations. For example, during our stay in Arizona in 2014, we were surprised to learn that the large and thriving Trinity Mennonite congregation (MCUSA) in Glendale, Arizona had stopped holding congregational business meetings several years earlier. The one regularly scheduled congregational “business meeting” of the year consisted of a small, simple ballot distributed to members during a Sunday morning worship service calling for a written yes or no vote to adopt, without discussion, the budget proposed by the church council. My guess is that the Trinity pastor was correct in thinking that many members would just as soon not be bothered with involvement in the complicated business of participating in making important decisions. I am pretty sure that this is also generally true at WAMC. Seeking consensus takes a lot of time and energy. Which brings me to my next point:

5. Participation. When all (or at least most) of the social institutions, including family, work, school, recreation and religion in which one is involved are interrelated and mutually reinforce one another as was more typical in the old world, it seems natural that a substantial amount of time will be invested in the life of the church, since it represents a kind of center for all social relationships. As I have indicated, back in Reedley church activities included not only Sunday morning worship services, but also many other programs and activities. We brought with us from that old world a similarly high level of commitment to the church, so during our early years in Fresno activities related to CCCMB consumed a lot of our time, energy, and money.

I will list some of the many activities in which we regularly participated. Not all of these activities were offered all of the time, and we did not participate in everything all of the time, but for many years the schedule was very full. We attended Sunday morning worship services and Christian education classes almost every week, where, as was true of many others, we took our turns contributing to the worship services, teaching classes, and not only attending but also contributing to the many other activities in the life of the church. There was coffee-fellowship time before and between Sunday morning activities. There were semi-regular Sunday noontime fellowship meals (with parish groups responsible for set-up and clean-up of both coffee times and noon meals) and periodic Sunday evening meetings. We attended choir practice one evening most weeks, sometimes with a light meal and other activities included. Not infrequently we met with friends after the Sunday a.m. worship service for lunch at Denny's (or more exotic places like the old Broken Bit up in the mountains near Coursegold or in Wilsonia near the Giant Sequoias), or for ice cream at Foster's Freeze after choir practice or other evening meetings. Our children attended many of these activities with us and they participated in Sunday School and other children's and youth activities. Some of the women met weekly to do crafts together (baby-sitting provided). Ruth and I were almost always members of the choir and at least one committee or commission (in which membership was often as couples and not just as individuals), or on the church council—or all three. Most of these small working groups met monthly, frequently in the home of one of the members. There were periodic workdays at the church, occasional evening fellowship activities, Vacation Bible School during the summer, a summer evening ice cream or watermelon social, working together as volunteers for the MCC Sale and Auction for Relief, a Sunday evening Thanksgiving dinner, a bus trip to the Christmas program in the Grace Cathedral in San Francisco, a Sunday evening children's Christmas program, a weekend church camp-out during the summer, usually in a campsite somewhere in the nearby Sierra Nevada mountains, occasional weddings,

funerals and anniversaries, Maundy Thursday and Good Friday activities, an Easter morning breakfast, a Christmas Eve service that, over a period of many years, attracted an overflow crowd, a CE class for college students, who were sometimes invited for meals in the homes of long-time members, a “dinners for eight” program that provided an informal context for social interaction—and other things, too, like monthly (or weekly or twice monthly) gatherings of some of the senior members of the congregation. One such informal group of seniors adopted the name “Amazing Grays” (or “Graze,” since eating together was one of our main activities). The “MBee” congregational newsletter (named by daughter Karen) was published monthly and mailed to members. Worship services included time for introducing guests and sharing personal concerns. Bulletins were mailed to regular attenders who were absent from a Sunday service. Major events in the personal or family life cycle were recognized or celebrated (e.g. Special refreshments were served during coffee time to celebrate Wilfred and Erma Martens’ and our 50th wedding anniversaries, but more recently similar life-cycle events, including serious illnesses of members, have passed without notice.). Geographic “parish groups” met periodically to serve a variety of functions, including smaller group discussions of matters important in the life of the congregation and organizing the delivery of meals to member households in times of need. All of these church activities were in addition to the activities that we experienced in our Kerckhoff neighborhood and what some other CCCMB members in some of the other areas of the city experienced in their own local parish groups. All of this, and more, comprised the “community” component in the identity (and in the name) of the congregation. We were not the only ones who carried with us the presumption, from the old world, that when the church scheduled an activity, we should be there unless there was some powerfully compelling reason for our absence, and if the church requested that we serve in some way, we should say yes—almost all of the time, at least.

In retrospect, I am not sure how we held all of this together, since Ruth, like almost all wives in the congregation, was almost always employed outside of our home in some way or another; we tried to keep up with the school and extra-curricular activities of our daughters who were almost always involved in school sports and/or music activities plus church and friendship events; we had occasional activities with our extended families, including work on the Neufeld family cabin and providing care for Ruth’s aging mother who lived with us for a time; and I was busy (for nine years) with work on my Ph.D. program at UCSB, in addition to my full-time teaching load plus administrative work at the College, or the congregation, or both—and we spent a lot of time renovating and maintaining our large old house and garden. Now, at this late stage in my life, I am tired even thinking about it, but in the

midst of all of this we did find a way to maintain the very high priority that we placed on church life. In many ways, CCCMB was still the center of our lives, like religion had been in the old world. It was more than simply one of several compartmentalized social institutions, each with its own separate collection of members and schedule of activities, as is more typically the case in this new world. This also meant that we had little time or energy left for experiencing and participating in the many enriching programs, activities, and relationships that were available in the social and cultural environment that surrounded us beyond the boundaries of our churchly community.

Of course not everyone brought to the congregation the same visions and motivations, nor the same level of commitment that we did. Someone once suggested that CCCMB originally attracted people with three different sets of expectations: Some hoped that CCCMB would represent a contemporary version of the radical Anabaptist vision (I think of them as the “beards and Birkenstocks” crowd.). My impression is that these are the people who were dominant in congregational leadership during the early decades in the history of the congregation. Others thought that CCCMB provided a better opportunity for doing evangelism in the surrounding community than the other more ethnic and tradition-bound MB congregations in Fresno (the “church growth” folks). Most of these people soon moved on to different congregations. And some found in CCCMB an opportunity to experience a more creative “high church,” liturgical form of worship than was available in other evangelical congregations in the area (the “smells and bells” people). My impression is that the construction of new facilities indicated that these members became more dominant in leadership during the last decade or so. Celebrating “the arts” has always been important in the life of the congregation, but I think the arts have recently become more central in both the architecture and the programs in the new WAMC.

There has always been a fairly narrow range of racial or class diversity in the congregation, but the congregation was divided into other sometimes conflicting subgroups. There were town/gown tensions between academics and other kinds of professionals; north/south differences between members who lived in different sections of the Fresno-Clovis area, which is highly stratified along racial and class lines; and there were age and generational differences. The range of differences within the congregation was relatively narrow, but, still, it might be reasonable to wonder what held the group together for more than one half century.

Actually, many people have chosen to leave the congregation down through the years, and some still do. There is a back door through which people exit as well as a front door through which new people enter. Later I will have more to say about the “nones” and the “dones” who have dropped out of church

for a variety of reasons but a solid core of folks have persevered, so I would like to suggest what some of the “glue” that held the members of CCCMB together in community might have been.

First, we shared many characteristics in common. An old saying expresses the sociological truth of a strong tendency toward homogeneity: “Birds of a feather flock together.” As I said, almost all of us grew up as ethno-religious Russian Mennonites, so our similar social and cultural backgrounds were certainly important cohesive factors, as was the fact that we were all (or almost all) members of the American middle class, and most of the founding group belonged to the same generation. Another thing that many of us, in our age group at least, seemed to have in common was discomfort with what we had experienced in the congregations in which we had grown up. A sometimes observation was that CCCMB people were clearer about what they were *against* than what they were *for*. Specific expectations varied, but there was a shared hope that CCCMB would be a “progressive” alternative to other more traditionally ethnically and religiously conservative congregations. It was also sometimes said that CCCMB was the congregation that disillusioned MB young people would “try” before they dropped out of the church entirely. For some, CCCMB was a “last stop” for people who were on their way out of the back door of the larger church to join the growing ranks of the “dones.”

But I think there were also many practices internal to the life of the congregation that helped to hold us together and sustain a high level of commitment. Many of us regularly participated in the many activities that cut across the boundaries of the various friendship, interest, and other kinds of sub-groups that might have divided us. I have mentioned some of the congregation-wide and smaller group activities that brought us into interaction with fellow members with whom we might not have associated otherwise. Even congregational business meetings brought many of us together for interaction (and sometimes open disagreements and confrontations) with people somewhat different from ourselves. Adopting a congregational budget is often a pretty straightforward process, but since budgets reflect institutional priorities, this, too was sometimes quite contentious.

There has been a lot of attrition in many of these regularly scheduled activities in the life of the church, and WAMC shares with many other congregations a pattern of decreasing levels of participation in the churchly activities that are still offered. Members feel increasingly free to pick and choose the activities in which they will participate. Even at WAMC there is not much left of that older way of doing church in which attendance and participation whenever the church scheduled an activity could be generally taken for granted, and volunteers could almost always be counted on to accept responsibilities when asked.

During our tenure in the congregation several tasks that were once done by volunteers are now performed by paid persons. We do not know about the earliest years when there was a church choir, but during the first years when we were members, Gerald Bergland received token remuneration for his service as director (much of which he used to purchase music for the choir), but choir directors have been paid during recent decades, as has the accompanist for worship services. Several other services that were once provided by volunteers but are now paid positions include: child care in the nursery, directors for children's church, youth ministries, program for developmentally disabled persons, and clean-up after "coffee time." With the decline in enthusiasm for potlucks, for a time monthly noon meals were prepared by persons who were paid, but noon meals are no longer a regularly scheduled part of the life of the congregation. For many years a member served as "bookkeeper," but this, too, has been a paid position in recent years. With these changes comes a transition away from "do-it-yourself" church life that sometimes has a home-made, amateurish feel to paid services that seem to be done more "professionally." Of course many positions are still filled by volunteers, including "handyman" services on the buildings and grounds that for many years were provided Marvin Penner, then Wilfred Martens, and, more recently, Bill Braun. I will list just a few other important and sometimes time-consuming services provided by volunteers: operators of the sound and video equipment, creation of banners, flower arrangements and other artistic installations, leadership of Christian education classes for all ages, membership in the choir, church council, commissions, and committees too numerous to mention. Of course changes in congregational culture such as these offer a mixture of positive and negative outcomes, but they do represent a substantial shift away from some of the original vision of the congregation. In the process, many of us members become more like observers and consumers in a formal organization and less like active participants and volunteer contributors in a "family."

It remains to be seen what kind of community can be sustained at WAMC when many members are together for only one or two hours, two or three times each month, primarily for a gathering of the whole for a worship service in which attendance is selective and most people who do attend are mostly passive participants, the typical Protestant "mere spectators" that Rev. J. B. Toews was so concerned about. If regularly scheduled shared activities and networks of relationships are like the threads in a tapestry, one can remove only so many threads before the overall design is lost—or the entire fabric falls apart. My guess is that a group of people who do not maintain a commitment to study, serve, eat, and play together are not likely to continue to worship together, either, and that is what we see

happening at WAMC as in many other congregations across the country and in “post-Christian” Canada and Europe as well.

Participation in the life of a congregation falls to a lower level of priority when religion is no longer integrated with, and in many ways central to other social institutions as was the case in the ethno-religious social and cultural systems in the old world. When church members feel free to choose between the church and the activities of other competing institutions, it is no surprise that travel, hiking, cycling, sports events, the gym or golf course, and other forms of recreation or entertainment; work, family or gardening time, or just sleeping in and reading a book often take precedence over participation in church activities. There are few people left like friends of ours who keep their commitment to (almost) always return to Fresno from their boat on the San Francisco Bay to participate in the activities of their church community on Sundays.

If one long-time lay leader is correct in his observation that “Volunteerism died twenty years ago,” then most of these questions about broadly shared participatory strategic planning, “lay” and “team” leadership, consensus in decision-making, and widespread participation in carrying out the functions of the church are moot. The congregation will be something other than the participatory community that the early CCCMB vision called for. Church membership will be more like holding season’s tickets to the Fresno Philharmonic or the San Francisco 49ers than being a committed and contributing member of a family. Ticket-holders feel quite free to choose to attend or not, depending on who is playing. We expect (or at least we hope) that family ties will be stronger than that. As participation declines, activities are either cancelled or persons are paid to provide services that were once offered by volunteers as part of the meaning of Christian stewardship.

6. Parts and the Whole. In the old world, it seemed natural that all of the institutions of society would be interrelated, with religion serving as a kind of center that helped hold things together. But what about the churches in our new kind of society? Can a congregation still provide anything like the kind of meaningful center for all of life that religion once did in the old world? I think that is what Anabaptism calls us to work toward as Christian communities and I think CCCMB attempted to do something like that, in an intentional, rationally organized way that fits, in some ways at least, in this new, urban world. At CCCMB the council and commissions were structured to provide support for members in many of the important experiences in life: Christian education (*didache*), social and economic sharing, personal care and support (*koinonia*), service to both our fellow members and the surrounding community (*diakonia*), worship (*liturgia*)—and ceremonial observances at significant

points of transition in life: birth, baptism, marriage, anniversaries, illness, and death. Pastors, moderator, council and commissions worked together to make sure, insofar as possible, that all of the institutional “organs” were fulfilling their separate specialized functions and that they all fit together in mutually complementary ways as they should in a healthy body (organism), or to change the metaphor, that “all of the bases were covered.”

Part of the point in Wilfred Martens’ diagram of congregational organization as along a horizontal line rather than a vertical hierarchy was that no one person, office or group occupied the peak of a hierarchical organizational pyramid, but it was also to make the point that all of the various functions of the church were similarly important. Just as it makes little sense to think that a healthy heart or brain is more (or less) important to the health of the body as a whole than other “vital” organs like the lungs, liver or nervous system, so it does not make much sense to assume that activities such as worship or pastoral care are more (or less) important than fellowship, or maintenance of the facilities, or education, or sharing in service to others. I remember conversations about what we might do to elevate the relative status of the commissions that seemed to be valued less, like trustees or fellowship, so that not too many congregational resources would be concentrated in the one religious function that is most public and tends to attract the most creative people in the community—worship.

But it seems to me that priorities have changed in recent years. It seems to me that the public worship function in the life of the congregation has become increasingly central, to the relative neglect of the other programs and activities that are also essential in the life of a healthy congregation—at least a congregation in the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition. To indicate that those of us who were concerned that CCCMB was investing a disproportionate amount of its resources (budget, pastoral and staff time, commission membership, new sanctuary) in the one function of worship were not entirely eccentric, I will cite just a few lines from Mennonite historian John Roth. From his *Practices* (2009) (p. 66):

In general, most Mennonites would not be inclined to think of worship as the primary focus of the Christian faith. At their best, Mennonites have assumed that the form of worship most pleasing to God is a life of conformity to the teachings of Jesus and a church community whose members model this way of life to the world around them. Mennonite worship, then, tends to celebrate God’s presence in the gathering of the community and in a life of discipleship.

Roth also cites an early (1527) Anabaptist document on “Congregational Order” that encouraged the members of the community to gather “at least three or four times a week” for a variety of purposes: study, worship, mutual encouragement and admonition, sharing of material resources and celebration

of the Lord's Supper. Of course persecution sometimes made that impossible, but persecution is not our problem these days.

So, as patriarch J. B. Toews once predicted would happen, the growing centrality of the Sunday morning worship service in the life of the congregation contributes to the increasing passivity, and selectivity in attendance, that are typical in many congregations. As religion becomes but one compartment in a context of competing compartmentalized social institutions, it should come as no surprise to find that members in many congregations are willing to invest less of their time and fewer of their other limited resources in their congregation.

Just as various forms of architecture and organizational patterns reflect different theological priorities, the growing centrality of worship in the life of the congregation might also reflect a shift in theology. My friend and mentor at UCSB, Dr. Thomas O'Dea, pointed out that (1) sacramental and (2) communal emphases in the life of a religious community represent two ends of a continuum. In the Roman Catholic tradition, he said, community relationships are not so important because the grace of God is received through the priests and the sacraments rightly administered. Relationships with the other communicants do not matter much. But for us Mennonites, community has been central in our understanding of how we experience the grace of God, so the sacraments themselves are not so important. In fact, we hear a lot in Mennonite churches about how the communion elements represent communal ties within "the body of Christ." Relationships are even more important than the consecrated elements of bread and grape juice (Real wine is still not used in most Mennonite and evangelical communion services.). In fact, in our "low church" evangelical tradition, the communion elements are often treated rather casually. There is not usually much of a ritual of consecration, almost anyone can serve the elements, and almost anything can be used. There is not often much of a sacred aura attached to the pronouncement that "This is the body of Christ." As the quality and quantity of many of the social relationships within the congregation decrease, it should come as no surprise when participation in communion and other communal worship experiences decline, too.

This brings me back to what I suggested earlier: a congregation in the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition that does not study, work, serve, eat and play together is not likely to keep on worshipping together either, and none of these activities is likely to last very long on an *ad hoc* basis. It takes a substantial commitment of time and energy to make sure that all of the various components of a healthy congregation remain, in so far as possible, in a vigorous, mutually beneficial, harmonious relationship with one another. Of course the worship service is one of the important "vital organs" in the church as

a living organism, and it is necessary to start somewhere, but my guess is that enjoying worship together is as much a *product* of doing other things together as it is the motivator for gathering for and contributing to other programs and activities. Worshipping together can help to strengthen and support the ties that bind a group of people into a community, but it works the other way, too. Worship can be an expression, or a ritual enactment (French sociologist Emile Durkheim called them “collective representations”) of the relationships that are shared by a community of people. When communal relationships dissipate, the rituals of shared worship lose a lot of their meanings, too.

In my way of thinking, a congregation should invest as many resources in planning, constructing, and maintaining the relationships, programs, and activities that support communal ties as it invests in its worship services. Of course community-building programs and activities can take on new and different forms. On-line communication might be more effective than a printed congregational newsletter. Enjoying meals together can take other forms than old-fashioned potlucks and can happen in places other than the church campus, homes and back yards—though I think the Kreiders are probably correct when they make the case (in *Worship and Mission*) that a lot is lost when eating and drinking together move from homes, as in the first-century church, to restaurants, cafes, coffee shops, and, more recently, even in bars. Returning to the same social forms that gave structure to communal relationships during the early decades in the history of CCCMB, or in the Reedley of my childhood, or in the Mennonite colonies in South Russia in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, or in Swiss Anabaptist villages in the sixteenth century, or in the early Christian communities in Jerusalem or Rome in the first century CE are not really options for us in urban America as we enter the second decade in the twenty-first century. But it is my opinion that finding new functionally equivalent ways to bind individuals together in Christian community is no less important in our new urban world than it was in those earlier times and places. In fact, in our highly individualized urban American culture and society, building community might even be *more* important. This will not happen “naturally,” nor will ad hoc arrangements be adequate. It will require a lot of time, creative study, conversation, and work. The fact that there does not seem to be much interest in investing personal and church resources in planning such as this might just be one more indicator of its importance.

At the very end of these memoirs I will provide a very brief reflection on a biblical passage (Acts 4:32-35) that presents, in my opinion, an idealized version of what a healthy Christian community looks like. Of course much of the New Testament reflects the many conflicts and challenges that a shalom

community must deal with. One of the goals of the Anabaptist movement has been to “restore” the vision of church life that is depicted in the New Testament.

So one question that might be asked about how we are doing church life is: What do we now mean when we identify ourselves as an “Anabaptist” faith “community”? In the WAMC mission statement, we proclaim a tri-partite vision that is deeply rooted in the Bender-Yoder version of Anabaptism: discipleship, community, and reconciliation. To what extent do we see this vision “incarnated” in our actual organizational structures, decision-making processes, and levels of volunteerism and participation? Or as recently deceased FPU historian Paul Toews asked from time to time: “If we were accused in court of being ‘Anabaptist,’ would there be enough evidence for a conviction?”

SOME CONTINUITIES

As is the case with FPU, in spite of these many changes that I have noted (many of which I have mourned), many good and positive things continue on at CCCMB, now WAMC. I will list just a few. The congregation provides the context for many valued friendships. For us, some of these friendships are relatively new, but others go back to our childhood and youth in Reedley, where we attended church and school with fellow members who are still our close friends. We learned to know Louis and Jean Janzen some 60 years ago when we were living in Pasadena with our young children. Other friendships extend across the years since 1970 when we first arrived in Fresno to teach at Pacific and join in church life at CCCMB. I will say more about this later but with some of these friends, we shared 20 years of community living in the Kerckhoff neighborhood. For us, these friendships were woven into a larger fabric of social relationships that were deep and thick, representing some degree of continuity with the old world. The congregation continues to provide the context for other forms of close and meaningful friendships for many of the newer members. Many people of various generations at WAMC are not just “bowling alone” in their spiritual lives. Their religious lives, like ours, are intertwined in networks of valued friendships.

CCCMB was very important in the rearing of our children. We did not raise them alone, but we were supported and assisted by many of the people and programs at CCCMB. We are very gratified that our children and grandchildren have turned out to be fine human beings, and we would like to think that we deserve some credit for that, but we also know that we owe a huge debt of gratitude to the people at CCCMB. If it is true that “It takes a village to raise a child,” CCCMB was an important part of our village. Relationships at WAMC do not seem to be as “thick” now as they once were but a pattern of

shared care and support for children continues on in both formal and informal ways. The mentor program initiated by Connie and others is but one example of that.

A quick survey of the WAMC membership list indicates that about a dozen adults who “grew up” as part of the CCCMB community continue as active members. These are second generation members whose parents (and in the case of Adam Schellenberg, grandparents, too) are, or were, members during a significant part of their growing-up years. Of course many of the people who were part of the CCCMB community during their childhood and youth have moved away (some, like daughter Karen, as far away as Haiti, Costa Rica, Madagascar, Fiji and Myanmar), including two of our three daughters and all four of our grandchildren. Another quick survey indicates that there are at least 30 adults who grew up at CCCMB and still reside in the Fresno area but no longer participate in the life of the congregation. There are many things that I do not know about the religious or spiritual lives of these “graduates” (or drop outs?) from CCCMB, but from what I do know it is clear that some have found new church homes in the area and some have joined the ranks of the dones. It would be interesting to know how these offspring of CCCMB who have moved out into *diaspora* reflect on the influences of the congregation in their lives, but, as far as I know, no one has asked.

WAMC also continues to provide many linkages with the larger Mennonite world. The congregation is much more supportive than most MB congregations of inter-Mennonite organizations such as the Mennonite World Conference (MWC), the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA), Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS), California Mennonite Historical Society (CMHS), and Mennonite mutual aid programs (MMA, now called Everence), to name just a few. CCCMB is also much more active than most MB congregations in supporting the global linkages that are provided through the International Community of Mennonite Brethren (ICOMB). Historian Paul Toews has suggested that these inter-Mennonite networks make an important contribution to any continued sense of Mennonite identity.

More locally, WAMC continues to have good relationships with the Mennonite Community Church (MCUSA) in Fresno. The youth groups of the two congregations have shared many activities together, including attendance in MCUSA conventions. We would like to see relationships between the two congregations expand to include many other joint programs and activities. We would also like to see WAMC resume exploration into possible joint membership in the Mennonite Church U.S.A. (MCUSA) as well as continuing its historic relationships with the MB conferences and other MB organizations. Recently (July 2020) the members voted to remove the U.S. and P.D.C. MB conferences from the

church budget. Among the reasons for this action was broadly shared congregational discontent with the MB conferences' restrictions on women in ministry and lack of inclusiveness of LGBTQ people. We will see what the implications of this action might be for WAMC, especially for members who are in leadership at FPU, and for any future relationships between WAMC and the MB denomination.

In many other ways CCCMB has provided an alternative to what most MB and evangelical congregations have to offer. Worship services have been very creatively and thoughtfully put together so that for me they were, well, what can I say?—"worshipful." The approach to worship in most other congregations is quite different, many with much more casual informality (structured though it is) and greater affinities with what is current and popular in American culture, including musical styles. It seems that recently a more inclusive, blended approach to worship has been taken at WAMC. There are clearly more current (and international) alternatives to the many traditional hymns that reflect the vocabulary and the piety of the 18th and 19th centuries in Europe and America that have provided much of the musical diet at CCCMB. But it is gratifying to know that WAMC still provides a version of the more traditional, liturgical and "high church" approach to worship that some people still find meaningful. There is still a choir, aging though it is, and congregational singing still sounds wonderful, especially in the acoustically rich new sanctuary. The long-term effects of the many changes that have been made at WAMC and almost every other congregation in many places around the world in response to the COVID-19 pandemic remain to be seen.

CCCMB reflected a much greater sensitivity to social issues than is common in most MB and evangelical congregations. In spite of recent changes in the USMB confession of faith, commitments to peacemaking and resistance to support of and participation in war remain strong at WAMC. Attitudes toward social problems such as poverty, racism, sexism, matters related to sexual identity and activity, and abortion are much more nuanced than is typical in most other MB and evangelical communities.

The congregation was instrumental in the establishment and early success of several local social service organizations, including: Central California Mennonite Residential Services (CCMRS) for adults with developmental disabilities; Concerns Enterprises that helped provide housing and education for low income people; Mama Makeka's House of Hope, founded by Pakisa Tshimika, that supports programs in Congo and elsewhere; the Victim-Offender Reconciliation Program (VORP) that takes a restorative rather than punitive response to criminal behavior; Circles of Support and Accountability (COSA) that helps sex offenders who have been released from prison adjust to life "on the outside"; and the Older Adults Social Services (OASIS) program that Ruth founded (more about this later). Among the many

other local agencies that WAMC people actively support are the Head Start program that uses the church campus; the “Pink House” urban ministries program that is operated by Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship in cooperation with other organizations; the Fresno Interdenominational Refugee Ministries (FIRM) organization that helps recent immigrants adjust to their new American social context; and occasional blood drives held on the church campus. CCCMB was a “missional” congregation long before that term became fashionable.

At times, at least, the congregational supportive care commission has provided more than just social, spiritual and emotional support for members (and others) with specific on-going needs. Over a period of many years the commission carried the primary responsibility for coordinating Christian education and other programs (and staff) for adults with intellectual and other disabilities who were associated with CCMRS. For several years the commission stored in a member’s garage a supply of equipment that might be needed by elderly and dependent members—walkers, crutches, wheel chairs, etc. Commission members installed grab bars in shower stalls and tall toilets in bathrooms to make it safer and more convenient for elderly members to remain in their own homes. The commission organized a schedule of rides to and from church for elderly and dependent persons who did not have their own transportation, and provided wheelchairs for those who needed them in order to attend worship services and other church activities. In several situations, the commission provided an informational and counseling process that supported members who could no longer care for a loved one in making the painful and difficult decision to move their loved one into an institution. Part of the “vision” of the supportive care commission was to fill in the “gaps” between care and support that was available through governmental and private agencies on the one hand, and families (when they were available) on the other. It is my impression that some support of this kind continues on personally and informally within the congregation, but it is now a less visible part of the organizational fabric of the congregation.

As I said, many people at WAMC are extremely generous with their financial resources. \$1,400,000 were pledged and contributed to the building fund. Members surely donated additional funds to other religious and charitable causes, but nearly \$70,000 outside of the congregational budget were passed on to other agencies through the WAMC church office. All of this was in addition to the annual congregational budget, which approaches \$500,000, approximately \$5000 per household.

One final comment regarding continuities that have characterized CCCMB/WAMC down through the years is that the congregation has provide a space where serious questions about faith and personal and ethical issues of almost any kind can be freely and openly discussed. There has not been a boundary

that was defined by a rigid orthodoxy outside of which even conversation was unacceptable. That freedom to ask questions was especially important to many of us who grew up within boundaries that were defined by fundamentalism and a legalistic version of Mennonite-ism, but my guess is that this kind of openness and freedom are pretty much taken for granted by our younger generations who have grown up in urban and post-modern environments. This openness to express doubts and ask questions has always been a part of the congregational culture at CCCMB/WAMC.

What is clear from all of the wanderings that Ruth and I have done, and after much rumination and many conversations, is that each congregation consists of its own unique mixture of strengths and weaknesses—and that the nature of each congregation changes along with the changing social and cultural context. Each congregation is what it is—for the moment, at least. It is also clear that each person chooses to participate (or not) in the life of a congregation with a variety of mixed motivations. For many years we felt that what CCCMB offered matched many of the priorities that were important in our lives and we were happy to contribute as we were able to the various activities of the congregation. It was our “church home.” Our sense of identification with the congregation is not now as strong as it once was. The society and culture in and around us have changed, CCCMB has changed to WAMC, and we have changed, too. In any case, we will not likely participate in or contribute to the activities of WAMC much longer, either for reasons of health (and eventually death), or a move to a senior complex such as “The Vineyard” here in Fresno or the “Sierra View Homes” in Reedley where we might return to the First Mennonite Church where Ruth grew up and where we were married. That would allow Ruth to begin to fulfill her wish: “I have been an MB for the first 60 years of our marriage. I want to be a GC again for the next 60 years.”

As with Fresno Pacific, I wonder now whether the congregation would even exist if some of us remnants from an older world had had our way. In this post-ideological and post-many-other-things age, there is not much of a “market” for the kind of congregation we tried to construct, partly because there are not that many people left who have experienced the kind of old world Mennonite ethno-religious heritage that we did. In many ways we were answering questions that are no longer being asked and solving problems that no longer exist. But there is not that much of a market for “square” congregations, either. At least many congregations that look a lot like what WAMC has become are in decline all across Europe and North America. It will take a lot of creativity and a lot of flexibility to counter current trends, but maybe that can be done. Social patterns are powerful, but it is still possible

to win freedom from the social, cultural and institutional “principalities and powers” that surround, constrain, and impinge upon us. That is part of what the Christian gospel (good news) is all about.

We will not be around to watch, but it will be interesting to know what kind of religious life will resonate with the “post-boomers,” “Gen Xers,” “millennials” and whatever will come after that. I will have just a bit more to say about this next.

THE NONES AND THE DONES.

Before I leave this topic of changes in the religious lives of Americans, including people at WAMC, I would like to summarize just a few more points that professional observers of American religious thought and life have to offer. First, it has become clear over a period of several decades, that the most rapidly growing segment in the religious life of the youth portion of the population in America are the “nones”—young people who indicate, when asked, that they identify with no specific religious tradition or community at all. To cite just a few statistics that indicate how substantial these changes really are: In the 1950s less than 5% of the adult population in America reported that they had no religious affiliation. That number had increased only slightly, to about 7% by the early 1990s—but then it began to rise to about one third (32% in 2012) among Americans 18 – 29 years of age. According to one report, in 2020, 42% of the millennial generation were nones. Young people were leaving because they increasingly viewed churches as being too judgmental, homophobic, hypocritical, and political. Many were reacting against the conservative reaction that had followed the turbulence of the 1960s. This does not mean that these nones do not believe in God because 68% say that they do; 37% consider themselves to be “spiritual”; and 21% report that they pray every day. The nones might be “spiritual,” but they are without formal churchly connections. They are the religious equivalent of “bowling alone.” And, more ominously for congregations, 88% of the nones say that they are not looking for a church home. It will not be easy to attract new young people to WAMC without simply “sheep-stealing” from other congregations, and the demographics of the congregation itself are such that we cannot expect to add very many young people through the process of natural reproduction.

As recently as 1970 about one third of young adults in the U.S. could be considered to be “regular attendees” in churches, but that was down to fewer than one in five (18%) in 2012. To highlight the magnitude of this change, Robert Wuthnow pointed out that if the ratios had remained the same as 30 years before, 6.3 million more young people would be regular church attendees than was actually the case in 2000, an average increase of about 21 young people in each of the 300,000 congregations in the U.S.

Participation in congregational life is down for several reasons. Wuthnow emphasizes two. First, many young people have historically dropped out of church for a time but then they chose to re-engage after they settled into a career, married, and were faced with the task of passing on to their children the values that they think are important. Since the period between the end of school and settling down is getting longer, young people who grew up in a church are delaying their re-entry into the life of a congregation—and increasing numbers are choosing to drop out of church altogether, even though they might have settled into a career, marriage and parenthood.

Second, Wuthnow points out that congregations and society more generally provide many institutions and programs to support persons in most stages of the life cycle, but there are few institutional supports for the growing numbers of young adults who are in a kind of liminal, in-between state during the years between the end of school and the beginning of settling down to a career, marriage, parenthood, and (for some) commitment to a congregation. Schools, universities, youth groups, camps, and many other programs and activities are available through the student years, and, then, again, for couples, for parents, for seniors, and, finally, many congregations had cemeteries attached for deceased members, but there are few institutions, programs or activities to support the many young adults who are in the in-between stage of life after the end of schooling and before “settling down.” Many of these young adults are trying to put their lives together with assistance from their peers and other *ad hoc* groupings and sources of information that are available to them on-line and elsewhere. Wuthnow argues that churches and the larger society are making a big mistake by this institutional neglect of these young people who will be the future of both church and society.

Like many other congregations, WAMC provides programs for children and has invested heavily in providing programs for students of high school age, but few or no resources are allocated to provide activities or support for folks who are in the ever-lengthening period between high school or college graduation and entrance into a profession, marriage and parenthood. For a time MCC, Voluntary Service and the Peace Corp provided some options, but the volunteer Christian service program that the MB denomination once offered ceased to exist decades ago. There have been activities or programs for college-aged and young single people at CCCMB from time to time, but these programs have mostly been *ad hoc* and short-lived. For many years the congregation has hired a part-time staff person to direct a program for high school students, but no other age group has received attention and support anything like this, and, as far as I know, no one has ever really tried to evaluate the effectiveness of this long-standing investment in high school aged young people.

In our “post-denominational” society, younger folks are more likely than previous generations to engage in “church shopping,” meaning that they feel free to explore other options for a church home as their personal interests and circumstances change. Even those who do choose to participate in church activities are less likely to be committed to life-long membership in one denominational or congregational body and are more likely to switch from one church community to another as personal preferences and circumstances change (e.g. selecting a congregation that offers quality programs for children or adolescents or seniors). Another phenomenon that is common among younger adults, especially, is “church hopping,” meaning that from time to time they visit various churches and other religious communities and institutions with no particular intention that they might settle in there, but just out of curiosity, or because of social connections, or for personal enrichment. I read recently that during this COVID-19 epidemic, an online version of church hopping has greatly increased since so many worship services are so readily available online.

Which brings me to another observation that has been suggested by a number of scholars who write about religion in America. Many of us, but young adults especially, tend to be “tinkerers” when it comes to matters of religious identity. That is, we do not really expect our religious identity to be defined by any single external authority such as the Bible, or a denominational confession of faith, or a pastor, or priest or some other sort of guru. We do not simply and automatically inherit our ethno-religious traditions as we do our DNA. We expect to construct our own religious understandings, using the materials that are available to us in our own varied and ever-changing social, cultural, and religious environments. A common pattern consists of patching together elements from here and there (e.g. family and ethnic traditions, exposure to a variety of religious faiths, the influence of friends, information that is available on-line, or from movies, music and the other arts), selectively combining them into something that is experienced as meaningful by the individual—something that “works for me.” Being “Christian” but also following yoga practices that originated in Hinduism and utilizing meditation techniques that are rooted in Zen Buddhism are seen as complementary, not mutually exclusive as they were in my old world. Many young adults are like the “Sheila” about whom Bellah wrote, who never attended church but had her own personal religion: “Sheilaism. Just my own little voice” that spoke to her in times of need, reminding her that it was important for her to love herself and to take care of the people around her, because that is what “He” would want her to do. Similarly, many persons (young adults, especially) draw a distinction between “religion” which has to do with external institutional attachments, and “spirituality” which has to do with individual subjective

sensitivities. To refer again to the analogy suggested by Japanese Christian author Endo Shusaku, if your inherited religious suit doesn't fit, make a new one. At least it will be your own.

I will conclude these brief remarks on the nones with a few of the observations made by Elizabeth Drescher who reported on her extensive interviews with some of the self-declared nones who now include about one third of the youth portion of the population in the U.S. First, nones from different religious traditions report different reasons for leaving their churches. Drop-outs from mainline Protestant churches reported that they left because they were bored, tired of hearing the same old thing over and over again. "We got the ethical lessons. Be nice. Don't be a jerk. We don't need to hear that every Sunday. We have better things to do with our time." Drop-outs from the Roman Catholic Church reported that they felt like they had been betrayed by their religious leaders, especially because of the sexual abuse scandal and the church's attitude toward women. Former evangelicals reported that they left because they were angry with their churches because they felt misled by what they had been told by their church leaders about science, evolution, and the environment. They felt that they had been tricked by what their church leaders had told them. It would be interesting to know what reasons "drop-outs" from CCCMB give for moving on to other things. What did they gratefully carry with them? Where did they go? And what did they happily leave behind?

But, Drescher reports, most nones are not atheists. More than two-thirds report that they believe in God and over half pray regularly. It is just that they look for spiritual fulfillment in places other than in church. The "Four Fs" of contemporary spirituality, she says, are Family, Friends, Food, and Fido (pets). "People feel most connected to whatever they understand as God, the divine, a Higher Power when they're deeply engaged in the fabric of everyday life, spending time with family, with friends, preparing food, enjoying their pets." I am sure that this list could be extended to include other things such as music and the other arts, gardening, and enjoying nature through hiking, birding, biking, kayaking, etc., but what is clear is that attending worship services is ranked "as the least important way to experience God." Actually, church-goers express pretty much these same opinions, Drescher reports.

Included in the growing number of nones are people whom sociologist Josh Packard and others call the "dones." This term refers to the contingent of persons of many age-groups who were once actively involved in the life of the church, but are now detached from participation in any kind of formal religious organization. They are "done" with the church. Packard and associates interviewed about 100 of these *Church Refugees* (the title of their book). Like other political or economic "refugees," he says, most of these religious drop-outs left their former (church) homes sadly, reluctantly, and only after

long periods of trying to stay. They left because they felt they had to leave for their own spiritual and emotional well-being and, even then, they attempted to carry with them many residuals of what they had left behind, albeit in different forms and in new non-institutional contexts. Few left after only one bad church experience and few rejected the church entirely. The dones were more likely to have left with broken hearts than in anger. The “vast majority” would like to return to the church if the circumstances were right.

So why did the “de-churched” leave? What did they carry with them as they left? And why do they stay away? Packard summarizes responses to their interview questions under several categories. First, what had brought the dones to the church in the first place and then kept them there was community. What drove many away was the fact that too many of their churchly relationships included a large element of judgmentalism, against themselves, against others within the group, and against outsiders. Homophobia in the church was a big concern for many of the dones. The dones recognized their need for moral and ethical accountability, but only in a context of mutual respect and acceptance. The dones left because they failed to find this in their churchly communities, so they left to share in alternative forms of communal relationships where they could deepen their connections with God and others in ways that seemed more authentic than what they experienced in church.

Second, the dones were eager for active involvement in the life of their congregations, but they left because they felt “compelled, confined, and coerced” by hierarchical and inflexible church bureaucracies. They felt frustrated because so many of the resources of the church were used just to maintain the internal operations of the organization, leaving little time or money to invest in meeting the needs of the surrounding neighborhoods and communities. “The church never really does anything.” was a common refrain. The disproportionate investment of resources in the Sunday morning worship service was part of this. The worship service is a “resource hog,” someone said. Packard recounted his conversation with the pastor of a congregation of about 100 members. A quick review indicated that the time that was being invested in preparing the 90 minute Sunday morning worship service totaled 137 hours per week and consumed about 60% of the annual budget. “Think about that for a minute. Thousands of dollars and hundreds of hours per month to produce four worship gatherings.” (*Church Refugees*, p. 71) Many of the dones had different priorities. They were eager to contribute to the well-being of the society around them and they finally concluded that they could do this better outside the church than in, so they used their new free time to do volunteer work and to meet in small groups,

house churches, and informal gatherings, thus avoiding the churchly bureaucratic structures that no longer reflected their values.

Third, in their interviews, many dones expressed a desire for a certain kind of communication within their communities, whether inside the church or out. They were tired of one-way, top down communication from a pastor, or anyone else who acted like a CEO at the top of a pyramid-shaped organizational structure. They were looking for open and honest communication between persons who respected one another. They were not looking for consensus on everything, nor for homogeneity within the group. In fact, they wanted to be with persons who differed from themselves on important issues, theological and otherwise, but did so with mutual respect. While recognizing that some degree of agreement is necessary in any cohesive group, they wanted to avoid highly prescriptive codes of conduct and statements of faith that they viewed as inauthentic. Any use of friendship as a pretext for evangelism, or conversion of others to one's own or an official theological point of view was anathema. They were looking for a "third way" between simply agreeing or disagreeing about difficult issues, such as homosexuality.

And, fourth, the dones who were interviewed by Packard were eager to participate. They wanted to be active in the work of the Kingdom of God, both within and beyond their local congregations. They did not leave because they were too busy or lacked time, but they left because they were too infrequently invited or expected to contribute much beyond attendance in worship services and money in the offering plate. The church was more like a "Target" store where one is assisted by staff in purchasing pre-packaged goods than like a family where everyone is expected to pitch in and do their part to keep things going. Packard comments: "Just remember the goal: to support participation, not to provide another service to be consumed. For the de-churched and for others on the way out, the church needs to be more like home and less like Target." (p. 98)

Wuthnow, Drescher and Packard reflect somewhat different perspectives on the reasons people are disengaged from churchly life and there is no reason to expect that people who are disconnected from CCCMB/WAMC fit the same profiles that they report. But it might be useful to ask dropouts from CCCMB the same questions that these, and other, analysts are trying to answer: Why do people leave the church? Where do they go? What do they attempt to carry with them, and what do they happily leave behind? Answers to questions like these should not determine the future direction the church ought to take, either locally or more broadly, but they might well illuminate some of the resources that are available and some of the obstacles that will need to be overcome.

So, what I have reported about the social and religious environment that surrounds CCCMB/WAMC, as well as what has happened inside the congregation itself, is entirely consistent with what many are saying about “the end of Christendom” and the emergence of “post-modernity.” Like every other Christian congregation and institution in America, WAMC will have to find an identity and a mission that are appropriate to the new realities. That will require a lot of wisdom, creativity, and work.

A social world in which settling down to a career, marriage, parenthood, and committed participation in the life of a congregation (and other institutions of society) happens later and later and, for growing numbers of persons, never happens at all, is certainly very different from the world in which I grew up. From the perspective of this new world, the old one must look very narrow, restrictive, boring, and obsolete, just as the new world looks pretty superficial and unstable to me. Mine is the world we have lost, so there is no going back to what was before, even if we wanted to. What remains to be seen is whether this new world will prove to be sustainable—or healthy for its members even if it is—and how many religious bodies will be creative and nimble enough to thrive, or even just to survive in this new world.

THE KERCKHOFF NEIGHBORHOOD.

When our family arrived in Fresno from Japan during the summer of 1970, we found that society, culture and church were in a serious state of ferment. Those were still the days of the “long sixties,” with flower children, counter-cultures, and hippy communes. There were elements within the Mennonite world that were sympathetic with much of this unrest because the recently reformulated Anabaptist vision called for a community of disciples who sought to live in conformity to the teachings and example of Jesus and not simply to mimic the ways of “this world” that were available in the dominant, mainstream culture. As I have indicated, both Pacific College and the College Community Church, Mennonite Brethren (CCCMB) began as self-defined Anabaptist institutions. But at the same time most of us also fit rather comfortably into the lifestyle of mainstream middle class America. Few of us were interested in the kind of extreme nonconformity that the Amish practiced—or the “hippies,” “druggies,” and “flower children.” So, when our family arrived in Fresno, our first big decision was to purchase (with a loan from my parents to help with the down payment) a nice, middle-class home in what was then the northern part of the city, at 3991 N. Millbrook Ave. **(Photo #27)** As requested by Karen, and unlike our small 620 square foot residence in Japan, the living room was large enough for her to stretch all the way out on the floor without touching anything. But at the same time we also

joined in the conversations in our congregation and among our friends about how we might more fully actualize our shared ideals of some greater degree of Christian community. Of course we were not alone in this. These conversations were also part of what was happening in both the larger church and society around us.

Several families, mostly connected with CCCMB and FPC, looked around for a cluster of residences that we might purchase to use as a location for some form of more intentional community living. One Sunday afternoon several of us families visited a former nunnery attached to the site of the old Roman Catholic St. Agnes Hospital near Roeding Park that was introduced to us by a real estate agent. The nunnery included a large communal kitchen and dining area plus sleeping rooms, living rooms, some separate residences on the grounds, etc. After a very short time in the main building, with kids running around making noise and all of us bumping into one another, we quickly concluded that that extreme form of communal living was not for us. We appreciated personal space and familial boundaries too much for that level of community. We were too individualistic, too nuclear, too middle class, too American for that degree of non-conformity.

So our collective enthusiasm for community living dimmed, but Ruth and I did continue looking for a location that might be suitable for some form of more intentional community living. One Sunday afternoon we took a drive out into the country to look at the old Kerman High School campus that was for sale along with a nearby cluster of houses, but we did not pursue that. A group of us looked at a very nice, large, old Mediterranean-style residence with several acres of surrounding open land (part of San Francisco Floral on Tulare Street just west of Peach), thinking that the large house might provide shared space and several of us might build our own residences on the open land in front of and behind the main residence. But nothing came of that, either. Ruth and I looked at the Red Bank Ranch out in the country east of Fresno (near Shaw and Academy, north of the Kumorrah Knolls residential development) that included a large old house, a big barn, an old “bunk house,” and a smaller separate residence on a five acre plot of rolling land near the foothills, but we could not obtain a loan that would have enabled us to purchase the \$42,000 property, which, in retrospect, was probably a good thing. We were also interested, very briefly, in a farmhouse and some other buildings just outside the small village of Centerville on Highway 180 near the Kings River. Some of our friends were interested in the co-housing movement that was just emerging at that time, but the planning process seemed very time-consuming and demanding and the final projects seemed to be quite expensive. Nevertheless,

Ruth and I did visit co-housing projects in Emeryville and Davis, just to see what they looked like, but nothing came of that, either. Interest waned.

Then one day during the summer of 1972 Ruth discovered a house for sale near the fine old residence on the corner of Kerckhoff Avenue and Sixth Street that Gary and Arlene Nachtigall had recently purchased. The house at 3636 E. Kerckhoff was on a large lot 100 feet wide and 175 feet deep. There were more than two-dozen citrus, fruit, fig, pomegranate, persimmon, avocado, olive and nut trees, and several grape vines growing on the property. There was even an unusual Chinese Date (Jujube) tree that our Armenian neighbors especially loved. But a Garden of Eden it was not. The trees were partly dead, the unpruned grape vines spread from tree to tree across the property and into the neighbor's trees. The yard was a mess. As was the house, which had gone through several owners in recent years, some of whom had embarked upon efforts to "improve" the house by counterproductive projects such as removing some of the original wood cabinets and painting some of the walls blue and orange and some of the old woodwork black. Window panes were broken, plaster had fallen from walls and the back room had been used as an outhouse by the family dogs. But, the lot and house were large and full of much "potential." We had long wanted to live in a big, old two-story house with a large yard. We had acquired a few basic remodeling skills when we converted the garage in our house on Millbrook into a family room. The price was right (\$17,000), the nearby Jackson elementary school had a good reputation, and the Nachtigalls would be our neighbors. We might even be contributing to urban renewal (but we didn't think much about the social implications of "urban gentrification" back then). So, after meeting some questionable demands from the sellers, the house was ours, and we were able to move in time for the start of the new school year, 1972 - 1973. My parents (and probably many others, too) thought we were crazy—and maybe we were. Much of our spare time and energy over the next period of years were dedicated to bringing order out of the chaos--an enterprise in which we succeeded so well that we were once invited to include our home in a tour of older residences in Fresno.

(Photo #29)

Soon other friends and acquaintances, many, but not all ethnic Mennonites with connections with the CCCMB congregation and/or the college and/or the seminary, purchased homes in the area, until there were about two dozen families living in the larger "Kerckhoff Neighborhood," as we came to be known to ourselves and others. We were an "intentional neighborhood" form of community, which meant that we had none of the usual characteristics of a formal, bureaucratic organization. We had no written statements of purpose, contracts, or minutes of our meetings. We had no formally designated

leadership and no list of members. The exact boundaries of our "neighborhood" were never entirely clear, as people moved in and then left, joined in a few but not all activities, were married and divorced, etc., so it was never easy to be precise about the boundaries of the community or the numbers of people involved.

For many years many (but not all) of us met together weekly (or almost weekly) for potlucks in our homes and back yards (**Photo #32**). We never had a formal agenda, but over the course of twenty years, we had occasion to discuss every manner of good and ill in all of church and society, domestic and international, past and present. Potlucks were not formally organized, either, except that there was an expectation that each household would bring two items in sufficient quantity for themselves and some extra—and their own table settings. Of course this meant that sometimes we would have too many desserts, or none, or too many salads, or none. But it also meant that there would always (or almost always) be enough food and no one would have to worry much about cleaning up afterwards. Sometimes there were exotic dishes, such as when Jerry Herskowitz and friends brought a squirrel stew in which the cooked squirrels were still whole, they seemed to be staring at us, and they still seemed to retain too much of their personalities. One of several major community projects was the construction of a neighborhood swimming pool (an “above ground” pool that we sank partly into the ground and surrounded with a wooden deck) in our back yard, because we had the largest open space available in our community of residences. Neighbors shared in the work of constructing, maintaining and using the pool. We did not mind that there was a lot of traffic in and out of our back yard. (**Photo #30**) I do not recall that we ever really worried about liability issues, even when things happened like Arlene Nachtigall slipping off the deck and dislocating her shoulder. We played together in the pool, on the volleyball court attached to a pecan tree in our back yard, and on the basketball courts down the street at the Jackson School. Our community service projects included painting a couple of houses for needy people in the neighborhood (not necessarily members of our "group") and jointly sponsoring a refugee family from Southeast Asia. Together with the Friesens and Nachtigalls, Ruth and I purchased the house on the northeast corner of Kerckhoff and Sixth, which had been condemned by the city as unfit for human habitation. We worked together, under Ruth’s direction mostly, to clean up the mess, remodel, and redecorate the grand old home, which subsequently served as the residence for a series of participants in our neighborhood community. Less formally, we supported several of the elderly residents, including Mrs. Tupper and Mrs. Fenn, the Bettosinis across the street from us, and others in our neighborhood. We shared garden and shop tools, borrowed each others' vehicles, and helped, in a

low-key way, to raise each others' kids. We went caroling at Christmas time and we shared in many other parties and celebrations of special events such as births, weddings, anniversaries, Halloween, Thanksgiving, etc., the largest of which was a twentieth anniversary reunion in 1992 of present and former residents of the neighborhood who gathered from across the country. More than 200 people participated (**Photo #33**). We had created an urban version of a "Mennonite village." The old world lived on in Fresno. At least in some ways, and at least for a while.

I will mention several events in which we shared during our time together in our neighborhood community. On two occasions we invited people from the congregation (and some others) to join us for a Russian Mennonite ethnic foods festival. We set up food preparation stations in various homes in the neighborhood, including German sausage grinding, stuffing and smoking in a neighborhood garage. People who knew how to prepare traditional Russian Mennonite dishes like *zweibach*, *verenika* and *plumamose* taught others who wanted to learn. In the evening we gathered in various homes to enjoy eating what had been prepared during the day.

One very traumatic event happened when Dr. Wilfred and Sandy Derksen's four year old daughter drowned in a shallow play pool in the back yard next door in a very strange and tragic accident. Some of us neighbors helped to construct a small casket for Rachel's body which we transported in the back of a station wagon and many of us participated in her funeral. The ties of friendship and mutual support that characterized many relationships in the neighborhood were apparent in all of this, but this painful event also served to strengthen the bonds that we shared.

I will mention three examples of "discernment" meetings that represented something of the nature of some of our relationships in the Kerckhoff neighborhood. When one of the couples in our neighborhood were contemplating adding a child to their family, they convened a group of us for informal conversation about their decision. We advised them to go ahead; they became pregnant and gave birth to a child. I do not know about others, but I do know that I have always felt a special connection with this person who has long since become an adult, because I felt in some small way responsible for her birth. A more painful conversation happened when a member of our neighborhood and congregation convened a group of us to announce that after many years of struggling over his sexual identity he was "coming out" as a gay person, terminating their marriage, and leaving the church and community. More routine discernment meetings happened when those of us in the neighborhood who were members of CCCMB met as one the CCCMB parishes to discuss what kinds of committee and other leadership and service responsibilities we were willing to accept for the coming church year,

the assumption being that each member of the congregation would make some kind of contribution (in addition to finances) to the life of the church. So in these and other ways some of us attempted to be a “discerning community” in which we tried to submit at least some of the decisions that we were making to the scrutiny and perspectives of others.

Ruth and I found that the relationships that we enjoyed in our neighborhood were about the right level of communal intensity for our tastes. We felt that we were supported by others and we felt satisfaction in supporting others around us. We felt especially good about the ways in which the children in the neighborhood (including ours) were surrounded by surrogate aunts and uncles and cousins. We did not feel that relationships with our neighbors unduly impinged upon our privacy or limited our freedom (and responsibility) to make our own decisions and live our own lives, things that we valued, because, after all, we were still very American people. **(Photo #28)**

Nevertheless, after 20 years in the neighborhood, Ruth and I felt that we needed to make some changes. Our children were long gone and we no longer wanted to maintain the space in our large house and garden that we personally no longer needed. Also we lived directly across the street from daughter Connie and her family, and we found that there was at least a little bit of wisdom in the old adage that if you can see the smoke from the chimney, you are living too close to your kids. We wanted them to be more free to raise our grandchildren in their own way without us watching from across the street. So we explored the idea of moving to a condominium where maintenance of buildings and landscaping would occupy less of our time and energy. We looked at the one condominium complex in the Kerckhoff area that was available at that time, but we had too many problems with the interior room arrangements, so we began to look elsewhere. We discussed our thinking with our friends in the neighborhood and when they asked us to wait with our move until after the big Kerckhoff reunion in 1992 that is what we did. We moved into Unit W in the Crown Chateau Condominiums, 945 S. Clovis Ave., Fresno in January 1993. More about condo living later.

Since our departure, the Kerckhoff neighborhood has continued its evolution. There are still a large number of households with connections with the university, the seminary, and the congregation who have chosen to live in the neighborhood for various reasons and there are still several networks of close friendships. There are at least seven second-generation households in the area (Barber, Dueck (3), Enns, Klassen, Nachtigall (2)). But the level of intensity of neighborhood relationships and activities seems to be greatly reduced, with no large weekly potlucks or other regular gatherings (though some neighbors sometimes gather for potlucks), no community swimming pool, no common service projects,

etc. The neighborhood looks a lot less like an urban version of an old world Mennonite village than it once did, but we are glad that it still provides the context for many good relationships. We remain grateful for the twenty years of friendship and community that we enjoyed in the Kerckhoff neighborhood.

I have often wondered how and why it was possible for us to sustain the type of relationships that we enjoyed over a period of more than 20 years in the Kerckhoff neighborhood without any formal organizational structures at all. I think now that it was possible because, as was the case with the people at CCCMB, most of us were products of similar forms of the old world. Most of the core group shared a common Mennonite ethnic and religious background. Most of us had grown up on farms or in small towns and we shared similar educational experiences. Several of us had attended Immanuel High School in Reedley, Tabor College in Hillsboro, Kansas, Fresno Pacific--or even all three schools. Many of us had experienced life and work in other cultural contexts, mostly with Mennonite mission or service organizations, and had returned to make Fresno our homes. Some of us related what we were doing to our understandings of what the Anabaptist vision was all about. For many of us, as in our old worlds, our lives intersected at many points. We not only lived in the same neighborhood, but we worshipped, studied, served, and played together in our congregation, and, for many of us, at our place of employment. So because of our shared backgrounds, experiences, and commitments, we “understood” each other in a way that made formal organizational structures unnecessary. We pretty much knew intuitively what to expect from one another, so we could coordinate our activities without having to write things down or designate formal leaders to tell us what to do. **(Photo #31)** I do not think there is much of that kind of shared homogeneity in our new, diverse urban world. When activities can no longer be coordinated intuitively by using our “common sense,” as much of our life together in the Kerckhoff neighborhood was, then formal structures, including bureaucratic forms, become more necessary, and that seems too much like what we experience in our places of employment. So shared activities decline and individuals and families each do their own things in neighborhoods as in church and other forms of social life. It is my impression that a lot of that has happened in the Kerckhoff neighborhood.

It seems to me that there are many reasons why in many ways the new world looks more attractive than the old one, with all of its complicated, overlapping relationships and fuzzy social and cultural boundaries. Life seems easier, or, at least, simpler if work and family are kept separate, so that what one does at home (or at play) is of no concern to one’s employers, so long as it does not hinder one’s

performance on the job; if neighbors pretty much leave each other alone; and if the focus of religion is on the worship experience, with few clear expectations concerning what one does in one's own private life at home, or in recreation, or in how one obtains and spends financial resources. And when conflicts do arise, they can be more expeditiously resolved if someone is clearly in charge of making decisions and if contracts and policy manuals dictate what actions lead to what. The old way required careful consideration of every dimension of the circumstances, including both personal and family histories, in which each individual was involved before any judgments could be made, and then those judgments were open to scrutiny and debate. All of that takes a lot of time and energy. People get tired. So neighborhoods, like businesses, schools, agencies of the government, and churches, tend to move away from the old informal ways toward new ways that are more rational and efficient. Of course many of the humane qualities of the old world get lost in the process. An "iron cage" is not a good place to live, but neither is the broken condition of individual isolation that Durkheim called *anomie*. It seems to be really hard to create a healthy balance between individual freedoms and social responsibilities. In retrospect, it seems to us that we got pretty close to what was, for us, at that time, a healthy balance during our twenty years of residence in the Kerckhoff neighborhood.

THE OLDER ADULT SOCIAL SERVICES (OASIS) PROGRAM.

I have noted that Mennonites have tended to migrate in groups and they have attempted to establish their own separate communities wherever they have gone: Prussia, Southern Russia, North and South America, the American mid-west, Central California, and elsewhere. And almost wherever they have settled, Mennonites have built institutions: not only congregations but also schools, camps, publishing houses, and hospitals and other facilities to care for needy people—the poor, the elderly, orphans, the blind, the developmentally disabled. Church-related institutions like these were an important part of the social environment in which I have lived most of my life.

Ruth founded and for 15 years administrated one such institution, the Older Adult Social Services (OASIS) program. Even though this was primarily Ruth's doing, I am including a brief review of OASIS as part of these memoirs for several reasons: I was the dean at Fresno Pacific when Ruth started the program, so I hired her and helped structure the relationship between OASIS and the college; there was really no clear separation between what Ruth and I were doing in our professional lives and in our marriage relationship; and because the story of OASIS provides one more example of what often happens as institutions transition from the old world to the new.

By 1980 Ruth had been buying, remodeling and selling old houses for about seven years. The housing market had changed by then, so what she was doing was becoming less financially profitable (Her profits approximated a teacher's salary.), and she was approaching the point of burnout on working with skill saws, belt sanders, hammers and nails, plumbing, cement, wallpaper, and part-time workers. She was tired of doing her fingernails with a belt sander, she joked, so she changed from taking care of old houses to taking care of old people, she said. In the fall of 1981, more than 20 years after she had last been a student, Ruth entered the MS program in Health Science Administration at California State University, Fresno. She was interested in learning about gerontology and programs of care for the elderly. Her MS project was a proposal for a volunteer-based in-home services program for the dependent elderly and their almost always highly stressed care-givers. At that time, social day-care programs for the elderly were virtually unheard of in the western states.

As Ruth's vision for OASIS developed, it became very complicated, since it involved providing care for dependent and often confused elderly clients, education and support for their caregivers, educational experiences and employment for college and seminary students who were interested in gerontology, and coordination of volunteers, including both students and other adults, almost all of whom were members of local churches. She was determined to provide all of this at an affordable cost for lower income people, which meant that she needed to raise money through applications for government and private grants, from churches and individuals, gathering donated furnishings and equipment from here and there while purchasing only what was necessary. OASIS developed a sliding scale of fees for clients so that wealthier folks paid more and lower income people paid less for the services provided by the program. The college agreed to include OASIS under its administrative umbrella since Ruth's vision was that the program would be closely integrated with the social work program at FPC and would provide both volunteer and paid work opportunities for students in the college and seminary. It would provide "lab" experiences for social work students. Both the college and the seminary were across the street or within one block of the OASIS houses. U.S. Department of Education Title III funds for assisting colleges in initiating new programs covered some of the start-up expenses. Ruth gathered a board, which was advisory in nature, since legal responsibility rested with the college. Social work faculty and the FPC administration were represented in the OASIS advisory board.

The OASIS program began in 1982, in a classroom in the Butler MB Church near the campus of Fresno Pacific. Staff consisted of Ruth and Betty Dickie, fellow church member at CCCMB. There were very few clients in the early months. One of the first clients was FPC music professor emeritus Dietrich

Friesen who was suffering from dementia. Dietrich resisted being part of the program since he was not “one of those crazies,” but his resistance decreased when he was told that he was there to give voice lessons to the staff—which he enjoyed doing. In 1984 the OASIS program moved from the Sunday school classroom in Butler church facilities into a three-bedroom house on Heaton, rented from the college, just across the street from the campus. Ruth’s vision was to conduct the program in an ordinary residential setting with small numbers of participants since victims of dementia often have trouble adjusting to new and unfamiliar environments. It was much easier for them to feel at home in a familiar setting that included a “normal” kitchen, bathroom, living and dining rooms, and a yard with a garden. The house on Heaton, which was owned by the college, had a garage with a separate apartment that served as the office for the program, a significant improvement over the closet in a Sunday school classroom that had served as the OASIS office at the Butler Church.

The complicated needs of victims of dementia and their caregivers called for a complicated array of services, many of which the OASIS program attempted to provide. The daily round of activities for clients included appropriate physical exercises, a reminiscence time for sharing memories that were stimulated by pictures and artifacts presented by staff, music, and helping with preparing and cleaning up after meals (provided by the government “Meals on Wheels” program). One of the many innovative programs at OASIS was a daily “community service” project in which participants would fold and stamp mailings for the college, shell walnuts, roll torn strips of cloth for bandages that were distributed by the Mennonite Central Committee, bake goods for special celebrations like birthdays, etc. Behind the community service projects was the notion that many elderly folk had spent their lives working and serving others and they still found satisfaction in service activities, memory loss notwithstanding. Transportation to and from the OASIS facility was provided by caregivers, by volunteers, by the local “Handy-Ride” program, or, under unusual circumstances, by staff.

Foundational to the OASIS program were two basic convictions. First was the idea that victims of dementia need not only a safe and supportive material environment, but they also need mental and physical stimulation. So the program was designed to encourage thought and interaction with staff, other participants, and volunteers as an alternative to remaining at home (or in a large room with others who were suffering from dementia) doing little more than sitting in front of a TV screen. Anecdotal evidence at OASIS and research evidence agree that remarkable progress can be made by victims of Alzheimer’s and other types of dementia if conditions are right. Ruth and her staff were constantly on the look-out for activities that could be added to the repertoire of stimulating activities. One of the

rewarding activities involved visits from the children in the Small World pre-school operated by the Butler Church at that time, about one block away. One of the temptations that OASIS staff encouraged people to avoid was speaking to the elderly in “baby talk.” Just because elderly persons are dependent does not mean that they are infantile. They are adults and they should be addressed as mature persons who deserve respect. So OASIS provided a highly inter-generational environment, putting the elderly in contact with young children, college-aged students, middle-aged staff and volunteers, and other elderly participants.

Second was the conviction that caregivers need support if institutionalization of their loved one is to be avoided, or, at least delayed. The day-care program enabled many caregivers to continue their normal family and professional lives, confident that the daily needs of the person who was dependent on them were being met. Five-day-a-week, eight-to-five day-care support was sometimes not enough, so OASIS provided housing and employment for a young student family to provide overnight and weekend respite care, allowing caregivers to be away for overnight and weekend events such as weddings, funerals, and family gatherings—or just to travel. Many spouses and family members have no idea what is happening when their loved one’s display symptoms of dementia, so OASIS provided education and support groups to help caregivers understand and know better how to respond—and to know that they are not alone in what they are experiencing.

In order to respond to the many needs that must be met if the elderly are to be able to remain in their homes, OASIS also provided in-home services, including cleaning and personal services, sometimes done by volunteers and sometimes by paid workers, including students from the college and seminary. Program offerings also included providing transportation for elderly people who needed to go shopping or for visits to medical offices. In addition to the volunteers recruited from local churches, OASIS arranged for workers through the MB Christian Service program and the MCC International Volunteer program.

Needless to say, a complicated program like OASIS was an administrative nightmare. Staff, volunteers and board members needed to be recruited, trained, supervised, and evaluated. Publicity materials needed to be produced and informational and fundraising events needed to be planned. Financial reports needed to be prepared, each in accordance with the formats, contents and timelines required by the various funding entities—city, county, state, foundations, and the college. At one point Ruth’s various financial reports were due according to four different fiscal calendars. But things went well. OASIS received good reviews from the people the programs served and the local media kept OASIS

in the public eye. In 1993 OASIS received a large and prestigious three year grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to help finance expansion of the program to two additional nearby residences, indicating that outside agencies, too, thought highly of what OASIS was doing.

Edmund Janzen resigned from the presidency of FPC and I resigned as dean effective in June, 1985. Since I had been granted a sabbatical leave-of-absence, Ruth and I planned to be away for the next academic year, so Ruth arranged for Betty Jo Dickie to serve as Interim Director for a year, with assistance from Anne Dueck. Both were fellow members of CCCMB and Anne and her family were residents in the Kerckhoff neighborhood. Since there were only a few adult social day-care programs in the western states in those days, Ruth was eager to visit some of the more mature and experienced centers in the eastern states, which we did during a long trip east from Elkhart, Indiana during the fall of 1985. During our six months in Japan in 1986, she was able to observe senior services there, so she returned to OASIS in the summer of 1986 inspired by more good ideas. In 1993 the substantial grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation gave her excellent training and financial support to expand the OASIS program from one to three houses, all within one block of the FPC campus.

At its peak, thirteen full time OASIS staff plus many part time and volunteer workers were providing more than 100,000 hours of services each year to more than 1000 elderly persons. In those days OASIS looked a lot like the old world, with close linkages with the many church communities from which clients, staff, volunteers and financial support came. Connections with CCCMB were especially close since several members of the staff and many volunteers were members of that congregation. Faculty, staff and students from FPC and MBBS used the services for employment or contributed as volunteers, and since OASIS was under the administrative umbrella of the college, the two entities were inextricably linked. Intergenerational relationships were an important component of the program. In 1998 Ruth received public recognition for her work at OASIS when she was honored as one of the Top Ten Business and Professional Women in Fresno.

But there were also tensions, misunderstandings, and conflicts to deal with. I will list a few examples. A Japanese international student in the seminary who lived in one of the OASIS houses became verbally and physically abusive against her roommate. Resolution of the problem was complicated because several offices in two institutions and a Japanese pastor and congregation became involved, so language and cultural misunderstandings were virtually inevitable. It was never quite clear who would represent FPC in the OASIS advisory board, nor was it always clear who at the college was administratively responsible for the program. At one point OASIS used their own funds to make

modifications to the houses they were renting from the college because OASIS had written agreements with the college that OASIS could purchase the residences for long-term use, but the college later informed OASIS that the college reserved the right to use the houses for other purposes at the discretion of the (by-then) university administration. I have already mentioned that Ruth resigned as director when the college refused to allow her to promote her niece because of new institutional policies that prohibited “nepotism.”

New OASIS directors did not share the original vision of OASIS as a church-related service agency with close linkages to local congregations, Fresno Pacific College and the seminary. So OASIS soon moved away from the three residences to a new location in another part of the city, effectively ending the close relationship with FPU, the seminary, and with local churches, fundamentally changing the original vision for the program. Program offerings were gradually reduced. In 2021, an OASIS program still exists but it is little more than a free-standing custodial adult day health program for seniors that meets in a large room with a simple and traditional schedule of activities. The support group for care-givers continues, but in-home, transportation, overnight and weekend respite services are no longer provided. Most of the original vision is gone.

I would like to suggest that several features of the old world were implicit in Ruth’s vision for the OASIS program. First, institutions serve best when the boundaries are open and there is cooperation between various institutions—school, church, family, foundations, and the several levels of government agencies. Relationships across age boundaries are important. But the new world moves in a different direction of increasing specialization and separation of institutions and age groups from one another, so it is much easier for a day-care center for the elderly to focus on providing just one service and it takes a lot of work for a congregation to include community service in what it offers to (and asks from) its members. Because Ruth was trying to carry forward principles and practices from a previous social world into a new social and cultural environment, OASIS became such a very complicated organization that it was probably impossible to sustain over the long term. So what OASIS is today is a lot simpler to administer, but it also meets a narrower range of the real human needs of its clients and their caregivers. One can only hope that other specialized institutions will fill in the gaps that were left as OASIS narrowed its focus and simplified its programs and organizational structures.

CROWN CHATEAU CONDOMINIUMS.

Ruth and I moved from our big, old house and yard on Kerckhoff into Unit W in the Crown Chateau Condominiums, 945 S. Clovis Ave., Fresno, in January, 1993, so in 2021 we have lived here for more than 28 years—with several long interludes along the way. I would like to reflect briefly on what we have experienced in our condo community because this, too, illustrates something of the changes that have happened in American society in recent decades.

When we began to consider moving to a condominium, we had several things in mind. We wanted to reduce the amount of time, energy and money that we were using to maintain our Kerckhoff property, but we also thought that condominium living might provide a context for new forms of the kind of community that we had enjoyed during our 20 years in the Kerckhoff neighborhood. We learned from our contacts with the co-housing movement that physical arrangements can make a big difference in patterns of interaction in a residential community, so we looked for a condominium complex in which units faced each other across lawns or walkways rather than being separated by barriers such as driveways and garages.

We thought we had found a complex that somewhat approximated our ideals when we discovered the Crown Chateau Condominiums in the Sunnyside area in southeast Fresno. Built in 1968, it was Fresno's first condominium complex. The 24 unit complex was located about two miles from FPU, so we could continue to live in southeast Fresno, somewhat near the FPU campus. It was within easy walking distance of many stores, shops, and restaurants, and, later, the Sunnyside branch of the Fresno County Library. There was a driveway around the perimeter of the complex from which residents entered their garages, so some of the units faced each other across interior lawns and sidewalks, while others faced the pool, lawn, and public parking areas. The landscaping was very appealing to us, too, with many large, mature trees on the property and many unit owners maintained attractive landscaping in front of their own units. The cement block wall between the complex and the vacant field next door included an indentation to permit the continued survival of a large sycamore tree growing next to the wall. Ah ha, we thought. These people really love trees, just like we do. In fact, things looked so attractive and well cared for that we wondered if the complex might be somewhat above our class level. Those were the days before cell phones, so a wall near the swimming pool had been wired to permit residents to use their home telephones while they were out by the pool. These people also enjoy social relationships together, we thought.

Our high expectations were soon met with many disappointments. First, we learned soon enough that since most residents entered their units through garages from the driveway around the perimeter of the

complex, and since front areas were mostly maintained by gardeners rather than by the residents themselves, there were few natural occasions to meet our neighbors. Few residents used the pool, hot tub or picnic facilities in the common area around the pool, so we did not meet people there, either. The Home Owners Association (HOA) met once a year for a business meeting as mandated by the state law that governed residential corporations. But the main function of the annual meeting was to hear reports, elect the board of directors of the HOA, which, according to California state law, had legal authority to make all but a very few decisions on behalf of the unit owners, and adopt a budget for the new fiscal year. These annual meetings included a meal and a lot of good-natured visiting, but we soon realized that the board did not really seem to be interested in input from unit owners. In the early years, the board hosted an ice cream social during the summer and an open house during the Christmas season, but those events were dropped after a few years. For several years prior to 2015, owners gathered only once a year for the annual meeting, and even then the only way to reach a quorum so that official business could be transacted was if enough absent members give their proxy voting power to owners who would be present. We occasionally interacted informally with the owners of a few of the units near ours, but sometimes many months passed between occasions when we even saw, much less conversed with neighbors who live just on the other side of the walls or sidewalks and lawns that separate our units from one another. We had never met the owners of several of the units on the other side of the 24-unit complex, so we did not even know what they looked like. A middle-aged woman moved into the unit next to ours but we did not see her or her vehicle for about five months after her arrival. So much for neighborly community relationships.

The board seemed to discourage rather than encourage social interaction within the complex, perhaps because such interaction might focus discontent with board decisions. Contributions to board meetings were discouraged by a requirement that residents who wished to speak to the board must register a request, in writing, one week prior to the board meetings. We, and we know about a few others who shared our feelings, were quite upset when the board began to remove the large mature trees that had been one of the reasons that we were attracted to this complex. The first such action was very traumatic for me because I was serving as a member of the board at the time and had been asked by the board to be “in charge” of landscaping. But while we were out of town on vacation, the other members of the board decided to remove eight mature magnolia trees from the common property, so when we returned, the trees were gone. When the board reported to the association that they were removing the large old trees from the property because they were “messy” and damaged the sprinkler system, some of our

fellow owners supported the action of the board. “Goddamn trees.” growled one owner during an HOA meeting, because they were “messy.” When some of the owners complained about the leaves that the large sycamore in the open field next door was dropping over the wall onto our driveway, one owner said, “Don’t worry. I’ll take care of that.” The tree was dead shortly thereafter, poisoned we guess. The lowest of many low points for us came one morning when a worker appeared unannounced in front of our unit with a chain saw and removed a 15 year old tulip tree about 15 feet tall that we had planted as a memorial to my father at our own expense and with permission from the then-manager. We received no warning and no explanation for why this was done. More than 30 large trees have been removed from the property over the years, so our landscaping, which once looked like a park, now “Looks like a cheap motel.” and “The landscaping looks like a Motel Six.” in the words of some of our friends.

During the annual meeting of the HOA in about 2010, the board requested in-put concerning the idea of becoming a “senior complex.” That designation would keep out families with small children but it required that the association provide some support services for the elderly that we unit owners were not interested in doing, so the idea was rejected by the owners. Several years later when the large original sign near the entrance was replaced with a new sign, to our surprise, the words “A Senior Complex” were added. In response to objections from unit owners that this designation is not true, the board response was “Oh, those are just words.” Board members seemed not to be concerned that this misrepresentation of a designation that had legal meaning put the HOA in jeopardy of a lawsuit. The fact that signs indicating that all units are “Private Owned—No Rentals” is both grammatically incorrect and factually untrue is probably less legally significant, but, together, actions like these indicated that the board of our HOA fit a pattern of arbitrariness for which such boards are notorious. Compliance with legal requirements, neighborly relationships and collaboration seemed not to be high on the list of priorities.

But in spite of a disappointing social environment and landscaping that is nothing like what we enjoyed when we first purchased our unit, we continue to live in our Crown Chateau residence for our own personal reasons. We really enjoy the attractiveness and convenience of the interior arrangement of our unit (**Photo #47**) and our large (for a condominium) private patio (**Photo #48**) and back yard, where we enjoy breakfast most spring, summer, and fall mornings. We appreciate the proximity of the shopping and services that are available around the nearby intersection. There have been some instances, though, of people living here for other than simply pragmatic or other self-interested reasons. J. C. Jones and his wife moved into a unit so they could help care for his aging mother who lived in the

unit next door until she passed away, after which the younger Joneses moved away. The Goodmans moved into a unit to help care for her parents who lived on the other side of the pool area. The second of the parents passed away in 2019. A sister and her brother (and his wife) lived in facing units for a while. We thought some of our friends might join us in the complex. Ray and Agnes Jantz from CCCMB lived in one of the units for about eight years and we enjoyed good neighborly relationships with them. When Sam Evans and his wife were nearing 80 years of age, they were joined in two other units by two women who had been friends with Mrs. Evans way back when they were in high school together. The three women and Sam enjoyed a lively social life together until Mrs. Evans passed away a few years ago, and then the three who remained shared some meals, attended concerts, and enjoyed other activities together until health issues forced Sam to move to a nursing home. It is still possible for old patterns of social relationships to persist even within the structures of a residential corporation.

I mention all of this because our experiences and observations in this condominium complex illustrate and confirm many of the tendencies that many observers of American culture and society have noted for a long time: the high value placed on individualism, privacy, and wanting to be left alone; the breakdown of neighborliness and doing things cooperatively; a tendency for organizations to focus on hierarchy and rules and regulations rather than more open processes that serve some sort of common good; a disregard for the natural environment and a devaluation of aesthetics in the interests of economic efficiency. Many people seem to prefer “living alone” as well as “bowling alone.”

I left the board at the end of May 2019 after serving as secretary for several years, mostly because hearing loss limited what I was able to contribute. Ruth was not only elected to replace me on the board, but she was asked to serve as board president during the fiscal year, 2019-2020. As she did during her year as interim director of the Goldensun program in Phoenix (more about that later), Ruth moved the board toward more consistent compliance with our own legal documents, county codes, and state regulations. Inconsistent and sometimes arbitrary decisions do not mix well in a corporate structure that is governed by legal documents and state law, even though it is also a neighborly residential community and the board is a group of friends.

Ruth’s tenure as board chair proved to be quite an ordeal. Her experiences in house renovation served her in good stead as she spent countless hours negotiating with the owner, contractors, insurance providers, making sure that the work being done was acceptable, etc. but she was able to see repairs to the fire-damaged unit next to ours completed by the end of her term in April, 2020, approximately two years after the date of the fire. There were many other issues to deal with. The adult son of one of the

owners repeatedly violated safety and other rules, was threatening and belligerent, and refused to accept disciplinary actions. Mother and son were both convinced that the board was “harassing” them so she insisted that any communication between her and the board must be via her attorney. There have been persistent questions over a period of many years about the cable TV that the HOA is committed to provide for owners. Ruth finally succeeded in negotiating a more favorable contract with our provider. Of course there are always issues related to the work of the HOA landscape maintenance providers, leaking roofs, broken sprinkler systems and water mains, termites, cockroaches, gophers and feral cats. And the never-ending challenge of keeping HOA fees low while making sure that 50 year old buildings and grounds are safe and attractive. Meetings of the board are often long and difficult and maintaining order during the annual meeting of owners is like “herding cats.” A time-consuming task of the board chair is making sure that board actions are in compliance with HOA governing documents (CC& Rs, By-Laws, and Rules and Regulations), Fresno County regulations, and California state law (Davis-Sterling Act). After 20 to 30 hours per week (sometimes more) on HOA business, plus numerous hours of lost sleep, Ruth was happy to pass the responsibilities on to the next chairperson.

But that was not the end of her nights of lost sleep because of HOA business. She agreed to serve (and I agreed to assist her) for three months as interim “manager” of the complex while the board decided whether to contract for the services of a management company or create some other in-house arrangement to assure that maintenance and repair work would be taken care of appropriately. As it turned out, this proved to be a very contentious issue. Ruth and I, two of the five board members, and at least some of the owners were convinced that the HOA needs the assistance of a professional management company. After a thirty minute presentation to the board by the management company that is the most likely candidate, the board continued on for an additional three hours of conflicted conversation, during which two of the board members walked out in anger, leaving the major questions unanswered. Everything was greatly complicated by the unfortunate fact that the board treasurer unexpectedly passed away while these and other issues were being processed. During a special meeting of the remaining board members, Ruth was asked to complete the term as treasurer. In September 2020 the board finally signed a contract with a management company, by unanimous consent.

As she has done with other organizations where she has served as director, Ruth worked hard to make the financial record keeping more accurate and complete and to bring the HOA into greater compliance with state law, county codes, and our own formal documents. To state this in the language that I am using in this report, she tried to move the organization from the old world of casual and informal

relationships, structures and procedures toward greater conformity to the requirements of the more rationally, contractually, and bureaucratically structured new world. Of course that involves a mixture of gains and losses. This transition probably inevitably results in many ruffled feathers.

Meanwhile, after exploring options for a move to a retirement facility, we have resolved to remain here in this place for as long as we remain healthy and able to provide care for one another, with hired assistance as might be needed. Our condominium is still a comfortable, convenient and attractive place to live—and we have recently enjoyed closer social relationships with some of our neighbors. At least those are our intentions in the spring of 2021.

PART FIVE: EXPERIENCING OLD AND NEW WORLDS IN OTHER PLACES

I have mentioned that we have enjoyed travel to various places in our global community and I have devoted considerable space in these memoirs to our experiences in Japan. Since our return from our most recent time in Japan in 2005 we have also experienced two other significant “cross-cultural adventures” here in our own country. In Part Five I will review some of our experiences with Mennonites in Kansas during the academic year 2010-11 and in Arizona during the first ten months of the year 2014. I will include this section a brief summary of some of what Mennonites who remained in Europe have experienced. Like most of us in North America, I did not know much about this part of our collective story, so I was fascinated as I brought myself somewhat up to date on what has happened to our distant familial, cultural, and spiritual kin who remained in Europe. I learned much of what I report in this section while we were in Arizona in 2014.

HESSTON COLLEGE: WITH THE MENNONITES IN KANSAS

For many years I have routinely glanced through the obituary sections in both our local newspaper and the Mennonite publications that we receive, but I have almost never bothered to check the listings of employment opportunities. I always felt either fully employed or I was enjoying being retired, so I was not even curious about another job. Ruth, on the other hand, regularly read the job openings listed in Mennonite publications. One day in June, 2010, Ruth asked if I would be interested in a one-year, part-time position teaching sociology at Hesston College (HC) in Hesston, Kansas during the 2010-2011 academic year. To the surprise of both of us, I said that I might be interested in checking that out.

We quickly familiarized ourselves with Hesston College. HC is a 100-year old two-year college, founded and formerly operated by the (“Old”) Mennonite Church but is now one of five colleges and two seminaries owned by the Mennonite Church U.S.A. (MCUSA). There were about 450 students in the college, most of whom are residents on the campus. A majority of the students who graduate from the two year program at HC transfer to other colleges and universities to continue their educations. In 2010, approximately 40% of the students were from Mennonite churches. The largest program was

the nursing major, which enrolled about 100 students, many of whom were older, “commuter” students, which set the program somewhat apart from the rest of the student population, most of whom were younger and resident on the campus. More than a majority of HC students were involved in the active program of intercollegiate athletics offered by the college. The student body included students from across North America and around the world. In 2013-14 the group of 60 international students at HC came from 17 different countries. Nearly 20% of the students in the dormitories were international students.

HC is located in the small town of Hesston (population about 4500) in south-central Kansas, about 35 miles north of Wichita. Hesston is in the middle of a large population of Mennonite people of various kinds, with numerous Mennonite churches in Hesston and the surrounding area. HC is surrounded by many other small, private, church-related colleges, including Bethel College (formerly GC, now MCUSA) just seven miles away in North Newton and Tabor College (MB), about 30 miles away in Hillsboro. One of the catchy slogans that HC used was “Start Here. Go Everywhere.” HC was looking for someone to teach two sociology courses in the fall (Introduction to Sociology and Cultural Anthropology) and three courses in the spring (two sections of Introduction to Sociology and Religions of the World), all courses that I had taught in one version or another during my years at FPU. The situation looked very interesting.

My major reasons for hesitating to apply for the position had to do with the fact that I had retired from FPU ten years earlier for what I thought were good reasons then and several of those reasons for not teaching were even more compelling ten years later, in 2010. Hearing loss was a major obstacle, but even more serious was the ever-widening cultural gap that I felt between myself and the current generation of college students, most of whom were younger than my grandchildren. I was not sure that I could effectively teach across the vast cultural divide that existed between the students and me. After all, I was from an old world that is no more and they are from a newer world in which I am a stranger. But, on the other hand, Ruth and I were still both generally healthy. We did not feel that we had local obligations that would keep us in Fresno and we felt like we were open to another “cross cultural adventure” in another kind of college, in another kind of community, in another part of the country, among different kinds of Mennonites. And so, after several exchanges of communication with HC administrators and others, we decided to accept their invitation to join the faculty for the 2010-2011 academic year. Crucial in our decision was a telephone conversation with Joel Kauffman, FPC graduate who at the time was the vice president for admissions at HC. Joel assured us that we would

be welcomed and supported at the College and that we would find that the students would be welcoming and responsive in spite of age and cultural differences and communication problems. We learned in due time that Joel was mostly right.

We were able to rent our condominium in Fresno under terms that seemed to be beneficial to both MCC staff person Emily Stednick and us, and we made a commitment via internet and phone to rent a basement apartment that was being renovated across Main Street from the HC campus. We resigned from the few responsibilities that we still had in our church, the condominium board, and elsewhere. We packed what clothing and personal and household goods we could fit into and on top of (in a large cargo bag that we fastened to the luggage rack) our Pontiac Vibe and headed east to Kansas. We felt a little bit like people fleeing the “dust bowl” (think *Grapes of Wrath*), only in a reverse direction, and we enjoyed many more comforts and conveniences.

We arrived in Hesston in the middle of a heat wave with temperatures above 105 F., a few days before our apartment was ready and faculty meetings began. Ruth’s niece, Laurie, and husband Wayne Schrag kindly invited us stay with them out on their farm near Moundridge during these several days. We had been in Kansas briefly several years earlier but we were surprised to find the area far more beautiful than we had recalled (California prejudices, probably). The corn, wheat, and soy fields were lush and green and the land was gently rolling, not nearly as flat as in our memories. We remembered seeing the many old farmhouses and barns and silos, but we did not really recall the many woods and rows of Osage Orange trees that served as windbreaks around the fields, nor the many tree-lined creeks and ponds in the area. We did not expect to find the many deer, Canadian geese and other wildlife that inhabit the area. We were immediately charmed.

We took advantage during our nine month stay to visit several of the local attractions. We visited the Kansas State Fairgrounds in Hutchinson twice, once for the Kansas State Fair that took place shortly after our arrival in the fall and then the large Kansas Mennonite Central Committee Relief Sale that happened in the spring shortly before our return to Fresno. We also visited other must-see sites in the area, including the amazing old Salt Mines under the city of Hutchinson, the Eisenhower presidential Library in Abilene, the Maxwell Wildlife Refuge where we observed Bison in the wild (though from a distance), Coronado Heights which offered a somewhat elevated view of the surrounding area, the scenic Flint Hills, the Crafts Festival in Hillsboro, the “Swedish” town of Lindsborg, an Amish restaurant in the town of Yoder and a café in Durham operated by some Holdeman people (another conservative group with spiritual kinship with the Mennonites). We had many opportunities to alter

our preconceived notions of what life in Kansas was like, and to overcome many of our California prejudices.

My first impressions of Hesston College were formed as I walked alone around the campus prior to an introductory meeting with the academic dean, Dr. Sandra Zerger. I clearly remember walking from building to building along sidewalks through green lawns with a big smile on my face and an occasional out-loud chuckle of surprise and delight to find a beautiful, well-maintained campus with large trees and many attractive, architecturally integrated red brick buildings. I could not believe my eyes. The campus was far beyond anything that I had expected to find out there in the middle of the Kansas wheat, corn and soy bean fields. (California prejudices again.) It was immediately clear to me that many people cared a lot about this place and were willing to do what it takes to make sure that the facilities were more than simply adequate.

My next big surprises came when I attended my first meeting with the HC faculty. I felt like I was in a time warp. It seemed that I had gone back some 40 years to when I first arrived at Pacific College. There were about 35 people in the faculty meeting. They were all obviously warmly familiar with one another and there was a feeling of collegiality that was reminiscent of what I had experienced in those early years at Pacific. Everyone in the room was “white” (since the lone African-American faculty member, Tony Brown, was on leave), and most apparently shared a common ethnic Mennonite background, very much like what had characterized the PC faculty during my early years there. There seemed to be no sense of distance or adversariality between teaching faculty and administration. One thing that was different from Pacific in the early years was that there seemed to be no gender discrimination, with women serving in many of the top leadership positions at HC. A spirit of warm Christian piety and commitment to the church seemed to be shared by most members of the faculty. I really did feel like I had gone back in time some 40 years. One difference, though, was that I was given an office that was much more spacious and attractive than any office I had at Pacific during the early years. I had a great view of the campus from the large windows along one wall in my office. I was impressed!

Some of these initial positive impressions were reaffirmed during my first weeks on campus. Attendance at a certain number of morning chapel services was required and students seemed to be attentive (or at least respectful) of the almost exclusively religious programs that were presented during the twice-weekly 30 minute chapel services. Administration, faculty and staff gathered with the students for chapel and faculty and staff people were also well represented during campus athletic,

social, and arts events, such as volleyball, basketball, baseball and soccer games, concerts, theater productions, art exhibits, etc. as well as the high energy (and decibel) dance in the gym that was part of orientation activities. Dancing is something else that could not have happened at Pacific in the early years! We were surprised to learn just how dedicated and hard-working the faculty was at HC, accepting willingly, for the most part, teaching loads that were larger than what we had at FPU.

We were pleased as we turned our newly remodeled two bedroom apartment in the basement of an old house across Main Street from the campus into our own new, even though somewhat temporary, home. HC faculty, the Schrags and a few other folks loaned us several items of furniture that we used during the year and we purchased other things from thrift stores in the area, so for about \$500 (\$300 of which we recouped prior to our return to Fresno), we (Ruth, mostly) transformed the bare apartment into a very attractive and comfortable home in which we could without hesitation entertain friends old and new. I would have preferred to live above ground, but the pleasure of living in a newly renovated apartment and the convenience of walking only about one quarter mile to my office more than made up for the lack of a view from our windows. Another plus was that we did not need to worry about tornados since we were already in a basement. This was never a serious threat during the months that we were in Kansas, though we did have drills at the College and a tornado had destroyed part of the town of Hesston several years earlier.

We quickly learned that Hesston was a very interesting small town. As I said, the college was across Main Street from our apartment. The college was bordered on the south by one section of the large and attractive Schowalter Villa complex, a Continuing Care Residential Community (CCRC) serving seniors that was sponsored by the Mennonites. Across the street, nestled between the HC campus and the Dyck Arboretum was a large pre-school that was jointly operated by the college and Schowalter. The Dyck Arboretum, which had been developed by one of the owners of what had been the Hesston Corporation, was about 200 yards south of our apartment, across the street from the pre-school and bordering a newer section of the Schowalter complex. The arboretum was a collection of native prairie plants attractively clustered along walking paths through lawn areas and large trees and around a small pond that was well populated with turtles, ducks, etc. I did not manage to walk through the arboretum every day, but I tried. It was a wonderful place for a walk, frequented by students from the college, retirees from Schowalter, and other community types like me. Kansas farmland bordered the college, the Dyck Arboretum, and Schowalter Villa.

East of the arboretum and just about 75 yards south of our apartment was the main entrance to the larger, newer sections of the Schowalter Villa complex. Some of the Schowalter buildings were clustered around a smaller pond that provided respite for ducks and geese and fishing for residents and others. Offices, a health center with exercise equipment and an indoor swimming pool, and Waters Edge, a combination dining hall and restaurant that was open to the public were in a building overlooking the pond. It occurred to me one day as I was strolling through the arboretum that neither Fresno nor Reedley could offer anything as attractive and inviting as what Hesston had to offer. But those thoughts passed quickly enough. There were too many reasons for us *not* to move to Kansas, beginning with the fact that all of our children and grandchildren lived far away.

The college and Schowalter Villa were not the only reasons that Hesston was a relatively prosperous small Midwestern town. There were also two fairly large manufacturing enterprises located in Hesston. Several Mennonite entrepreneurs and others had founded and operated over a period of several decades the Hesston Corporation, a major manufacturer of farm equipment. The Hesston Corporation had been sold by its original, mostly Mennonite owners, renamed as AGCO, and was reduced in size by the time we arrived, but it still employed a large number of workers who lived in and around Hesston. Similarly, the Excel Corporation manufactured Hustler mowers, “the world’s first zero radius turn riding mowers.” Excel, too, was initially founded by a group of Mennonites and had been sold to another corporation, but it was still a major employer in the area. For these and other reasons the town appeared to be well-maintained, without the abandoned homes and businesses and the obvious poverty that plague many older towns across the U.S.

Partly because of size and relative prosperity, Hesston was a safe, friendly and serene place to live and work. Many residents did not bother to lock their homes or vehicles. We were shocked one day shortly after our arrival when we walked to the large Schowalter maintenance and storage facility just down the street from our apartment. The doors were all wide open giving easy access to all manner of equipment and supplies—but there was no one in the building and no security at all. People routinely greeted one another on the streets and in other public places. Even the police were friendly. Ruth and I were shocked, again, when out on a walk one evening early in our stay in Hesston. As we were walking south on Main street toward Schowalter Villa, a police car drove across the intersection some 50 yards away. The officer looked up the street, saw us, and waved a friendly wave. We chuckled at the contrast with most of the police in Fresno.

I had another rather humorous encounter with the Hesston police department just a few days before we left to return to Fresno. I was on one of my final walks with my camera on a pleasant May afternoon. I had not taken any satisfactory photos of the pre-school, so I took several photos from here and there outside the fence around the buildings and play areas. I then made a leisurely circle through the arboretum and was up on the lawn taking photos of a brilliantly blooming plant near one of the Schowalter residences when a uniformed person approached me. I immediately assumed that he was a security guard and that he was there to chastise me for walking on the lawn, the only transgression that I could think of that I might have committed. But no, he was Doug Schroeder, the chief of the Hesston city police department and he informed me that his department had been looking for me. It seemed that the staff at the child development center had observed an unknown, and therefore suspicious looking elderly male taking photos of the children for who knows what reasons, so they had notified the police. I showed the officer my California driver's license and explained my connections with the college. I told him that I was taking photos to share with family and friends since we were leaving for California in a few days, and I offered to delete from my camera any photos that might raise any questions at all. "Oh," he said with a chuckle, "You mean you are planning to tell folks back in California how great life is out here in Kansas?" I informed him that he was exactly right. The whole encounter was very friendly, as one might expect in a town like Hesston. But it did show that even there some people were suspicious and on guard in ways that I am sure almost no one would have thought of back in the Reedley of my childhood.

All of us who know anything at all about Hesston, Kansas were stunned when we heard the news that there had been a shooting in and around the Excel Corporation plant in February 2016. Hesston chief of police Doug Schroeder shot and killed an Excel employee who had killed three people and wounded 14 others during a shooting rampage. The whole thing was so out of character for the Hesston community as to be almost beyond belief. But it happened, bringing to mind what has been repeated over and over again after mass shootings here and there across the U.S: "If it can happen in Hesston, it can happen anywhere."

Of course it helped that we already had some connections in Hesston and the surrounding area before we even arrived. Ruth's niece and husband, Laurie and Wayne Schrag, lived on a farm near Moundridge, about seven miles west of Hesston (on "Dutch Road"). John and Betty Bergey, both since deceased, friends and former residents in our Kerckhoff neighborhood in Fresno, were living in a Schowalter apartment that overlooked the pond. James and Faith Wenger, who had been fellow

missionaries in Japan and who had then served as pastors in the Mennonite Community Church in Fresno, lived just one block from our apartment. Malinda Penner Nikkel, our English teacher at Immanuel (with whom I had contact in Japan during my army days) lived in Hillsboro after retiring from teaching at Tabor College. Don and Connie Isaak, former fellow faculty member at Pacific and church members at CCCMB, and retired from teaching at Tabor, also lived in Hillsboro. Adonijah and Eva Pauls, former director of the Library at Pacific, lived in MacPherson, some twenty miles from Hesston, as did Kent Eaton, former dean at FPU. There were others whom we had known here and there. We were far away in Kansas, but we were still part of a small world, indeed!

Our circle of friends and acquaintances expanded quickly, partly because of our connections at the college, but also because of contacts that we made during our visits to thirteen Mennonite churches in the area. There seems to generally be a natural “fit” between small towns and Protestant congregational life in America, and that is what we found in our visits to churches in south-central Kansas. Each congregation that we visited had its own particular flavor, but all seemed to be thriving, with good attendance, many shared activities from week to week and month to month, and a strong sense of fellowship. This sense of community was facilitated, in part, by building designs that included large spaces around the entryway into the sanctuary where it was convenient for people to chat before and after the worship services. Every congregation that we visited, except one, had made provision for such spaces for gathering and conversation and the congregation that was the lone exception was raising funds for a remodeling project that included enlarging the space around the entrance to their sanctuary. Few congregations in California that we know of provide similar spaces for informal fellowship, though the new facilities at WAMC are an exception to this generalization. Of course weather conditions are somewhat different, so people need places to hang their winter coats, but I think other reasons are also involved. Relationships still seem to be more highly valued in small-town Kansas than in urban California.

We were surprised to find that a tradition that we remembered from our childhood still seemed to be alive and well in several of the churches that we visited. Several times we were invited to the homes of members for lunch after the Sunday morning worship services. And lunch did not mean going out to a restaurant or something easy and light like salads or sandwiches. It meant serious meals, with meat and mashed potatoes and the whole thing. It brought back childhood memories, for Ruth especially, of her mother putting a chicken or roast into the oven before church in anticipation of noontime guests in the Neufeld home after the church service. There was also a coordinated schedule of noon meals for

college students hosted by the congregations in the area, so students could visit first one congregation then another, lunch provided. The social dimension of religious life still seemed to be more highly valued in the Midwest than what we were experiencing in Fresno. What we saw and experienced confirmed what many sociologists have observed: it takes a “critical population mass” and “institutional completeness” to sustain an ethno-religious identity. There were enough Mennonite people and enough Mennonite institutions in the area to sustain a stronger sense of Mennonite identity than we see in many other parts of the Mennonite world.

The congregation that we attended most frequently was the large (with seating for about 600) Hesston Mennonite Church across the street and one block from our apartment on Main street. The church was a kind of joint venture between HC and the congregation, since the church building was on a site that was surrounded on three sides by the college campus, with Main Street on the fourth side. The college and congregation had shared in planning and financing a major building project six years earlier. The college used the church sanctuary for chapel services and other church facilities for various college activities. Since both HC students and elderly folks from nearby Schowalter and elsewhere attended the church in fairly large numbers, it seemed natural that worship services should include both traditional hymns, sometimes sung a cappella (“Old” Mennonite style) and sometimes accompanied by the large pipe organ in the sanctuary, and contemporary music, often sung “off the wall” from the large screen above the stage in the sanctuary (but almost always with both words and musical scores on the screen). Contemporary music was often accompanied by a small instrumental group and a small group of “worship leaders” that often included HC students. Two worship styles that usually seem to be incompatible were very effectively “blended” in worship services at Hesston Mennonite Church, probably because both the young and the old recognized that mutual respect and acceptance were appropriate in this very clearly multi-generational congregation. We were impressed with both the mutually beneficial relationship that existed between the college and the congregation (though not without occasional “bumps in the road,” we were assured) and the creative ways in which varied styles of worship were integrated into what seemed to be a coherent whole.

We felt very much at home in eleven of the thirteen congregations that we visited during our sojourn in Hesston. We visited urban congregations in Wichita. We visited small town congregations in Hesston, Newton and Hillsboro, and we visited two large, historic rural congregations, Eden outside of Moundridge and Alexanderwohl near Goessel where a Mennonite museum is also located. The eleven congregations in which we felt comfortable all belonged to the MCUSA denomination. We did not

feel comfortable in the two MB congregations that we visited, in part because they had chosen leadership and worship styles that showed little respect for the historic traditions of the denomination or for the sensitivities of the many senior members of their own church communities.

Of course I was not hired by Hesston College just so we could sightsee, visit churches and become more familiar with life in Kansas. I was also expected to teach the students who enrolled (freely or under curricular coercion) in my courses (**Photo #39**). This proved to be a significant challenge for me, and for the students, too. The first class I met was Introduction to Sociology, in a crowded, windowless classroom in the basement of the HC library. More than 50 students were crowded into a classroom that had seating for only 50, so some of the students had to sit on the floor. This was not the most optimal setting for a first classroom experience, neither for the new freshman students nor for me. I had not been in a situation anything like this for more than ten years, so I was already apprehensive, not knowing what abilities and expectations my mostly young students might bring to the course.

My worst fears were confirmed when I gave the first quiz. Approximately one half of the students received grades of D or F—something I had never experienced before in all my years of college teaching. But I was not yet overly concerned, since the quiz was worth only ten points out of a possible total of about 500, and I felt confident that the students would have learned that I really meant it when I said that examinations would test their comprehension of course materials, and that included the expectation that they would have read and understood materials in the textbook that I did not mention during class sessions. I explained that approximately 50% of the items on the examinations would be based on textbook materials that I did *not* mention in class lectures, so I encouraged the students to *read* the textbook and to actually use the study materials included in the text—chapter outlines, section reviews, glossary, and study questions. I further explained that the guidelines of college and university accrediting associations still defined one unit of college credit as approximately two hours of outside preparation for each one hour in class. Many of the students looked at me as if I must be from some other planet.

I did not know how to respond when the same thing happened in the first of four larger course examinations, each worth 100 points. Again, one half of the students received grades of D or F. Since I graded on a version of a “curve,” this meant that approximately one half of the students scored 50% or less of the top score on the exam earned by a fellow student. My curve did NOT begin with a perfect 100%. Since scores like this had never happened to me before, my first response was to blame myself for the poor performance of the students. It must be me, I thought. I must have lost it. So, for the first

time in my teaching career, I scheduled a make-up procedure for students who had received grades of D or F. I was stunned, again, when nearly half of the students who had failed the examination did not even bother to show up for the make-up examination, and of the 14 who did re-take the examination, only three improved their scores. All but three of the 25 students who had done poorly showed no indication that they had any interest in taking advantage of an opportunity to improve their scores. At this point I made one of several calls on division chair Kevin Wilder requesting “pastoral counseling.” I was wasting the college’s money and the time of both the students and me, I told Kevin, volunteering to return to California and let someone else try to teach these kids.

But Kevin assured me that what I was experiencing was not all that unusual. Students were not accustomed to doing college work like this, something that was supported by frequent requests from students for a “study guide.” When I pointed out to the students that their textbooks included a whole variety of study aids for each chapter, the response was often something like: “But we need help to know what will be on the test since there is so much material in each chapter that it is impossible to learn it all.” Many students, it seemed, were unable to even comprehend what it might mean to independently read, understand, and be held accountable for a body of written material. Many also seemed to be unable to write brief essay-type responses to open-ended questions about the material. They were finished after just a sentence or two, and even these sentences were sometimes mere fragments. They were accustomed, it seemed, to being told exactly what would be on their examinations so they could successfully respond to objective questions about what they had been instructed to remember for the exams. It was helpful to recognize that my students were not necessarily stupid, lazy nor immoral (though some of the students might have been at least one of these), but they were products of an educational system that had changed. I had heard that “No Child Left Behind” policies had resulted in teachers “teaching to the test.” Now I was discovering that the student side of NCLB was that students were accustomed to “learning to the test.”

None of this was unique to students at Hesston College, but there were factors there that were different from what I had experienced in Fresno (and in Japan). HC was a two year college, so new students did not have the more mature junior and senior level students who could serve as role models for what it means to do college level academic work. Some faculty complained that the student life staff at HC did such a good job in developing a sense of “community” that the academic component of the student experience was underdeveloped. Many HC students (especially the resident students) had so much fun that academic work seemed like little more than a distraction from the really important things about

college life. There did not seem to be much of an “academic culture” at HC. So, as I had done in Japan, I learned to adjust by changing my expectations. My later examinations included less material that we had not covered in class and I was willing to give credit for lower quality responses to open-ended questions. I could see no good reason for giving failing grades to large numbers of students because of the personal trauma that would be for many of them—and it might have cost the college a lot of tuition money if the students dropped out prematurely. So only the few students who gave no evidence at all that they had even attempted to fulfill the requirements of the course or the expectations of the college received failing grades.

Having said all of that, I am also happy to report that I met some of the finest students of my teaching career at HC. A significant number of the students were well prepared, highly motivated, and very competent. It was an honor and a privilege for me to be their teacher for a brief period of time. In my limited sample, many, but by no means all, of these fine students were ethnic Mennonites who were the products of Mennonite families, schools, churches and institutions. One of the finest examples was an attractive young woman (with the longest hair I have ever seen) from the local area who was not only one of the brightest students that I have ever encountered but she also seemed to excel at everything she did, including music and student life activities. Not only that, but she was thoughtful and kind, too. For example, for many decades I graded exams on a “curve,” with the curve beginning with the top score in the class, not with 100%. I used this system because student scores varied with the difficulty of the exam. In my curve grading system, if the exam was difficult and the top score was 80%, that student would receive an A grade because that is where the curve began. So when this student realized how my system worked, once she was confident that she had secured an A grade for herself, she began to skip essays on exams in order to lower her grade at the top of the curve since the effect was to raise the grades of the other students in the class. I was truly amazed when she explained to me why she was suddenly skipping essays on her exams. After graduating from HC, she graduated from a Mennonite university in Canada and then served as an English teacher in Korea for one year. I was heartbroken several years later when her father sent the message that she had died in a tragic parachute diving accident. I still grieve this terrible loss.

At the other end of the continuum, most, but not all, of the students who struggled academically were athletes and very few were ethnic Mennonites. Most of the members of the faculty at HC were very much aware of all of this and they struggled mightily to find ways to support the great variety of students who showed up in their classrooms. And the college received recognition for being

exceptionally successful in what it was doing. While I was there, Hesston College was selected (by the *Washington Journal*) as the second best two year college in the U.S. This honor led to the biggest celebration of being number two that I have ever seen. And, more substantially, HC received accreditation for a ten year period, the longest period of accreditation given by their regional accrediting agency—another good reason for a big celebration.

HC faced many daunting challenges as it contemplated its future. By the fall of 2020 enrolment had declined to 363. Not only was the student population declining, it was also changing. In 2020 the Mennonite population in the student body was down to 19% and SAT scores had declined substantially in recent years. But the entire situation in American higher education was also changing. And the MCUSA, the primary supporting constituency for the college, was also experiencing very significant changes, including the nearly 50% decline in membership during the previous decade that I have mentioned. The administration and faculty seemed to be well aware that the college would need to be very smart and very nimble if they were to continue to thrive—or even just survive. I am not sure that it was clear to anyone what all might be necessary to accomplish this.

We returned to Fresno from Hesston in May 2011, right after graduation, stopping along the way to visit Ruth's grandniece, Kristen Schrag who was teaching in the Mission School on the Hopi Indian reservation, which is part of the much larger Navajo territory. We also visited the old Hopi village of Moenkopi where Ruth had once served as a Christian service volunteer (more about this later) and the Grand Canyon. This was a fitting conclusion to our Hesston sojourn, which we treasure as one of the most interesting and enjoyable periods of our lives.

MENNONITES IN ARIZONA

Our feelings of being settled in Fresno were interrupted once again one day in November 2013 when Ruth received a phone call inviting her to consider a three to six month assignment as Interim Executive Director of Goldensun Peace Ministries (GS) in Glendale, Arizona, a suburb of Phoenix. Goldensun provided “faith based” residences and other support for “special needs” adults with intellectual, developmental and other disabilities. Goldensun was founded in 2004 with the encouragement and support of MCC and had many close relationships with the nearby Trinity Mennonite Church in Glendale. When Ruth accepted this invitation, our personal stories intersected, for a second time for Ruth, with the larger story of Mennonites in Arizona. (Note: Much of what I will report here is

informed by H. Esch, *The Mennonites in Arizona* and conversations with retired MCUSA pastor Peter Wiebe and others.)

I will begin with some personal history. Ruth's first direct contact with the work of Mennonites in Arizona happened during the summer of 1954, after our first year at Reedley College. Ruth travelled to the old Hopi village of Moenkopi where she was a short-term Voluntary Service (VS) worker for a couple of weeks. Her assignment was to assist the Mennonite missionaries who were serving on the Hopi reservation. This was actually Ruth's second attempt to be a "missionary." The first was as a fifth or sixth grader when she walked across the street from the Neufeld house to ours to invite me to attend Daily Vacation Bible School in the First Mennonite Church in Reedley. That venture ended badly when Tuffy, our big German Shepherd mix, bit her in the hand. Her second missionary experience was also a mostly unhappy one. Instead of having some kind of "ministry" with Hopi people as she anticipated, she spent almost all of her time serving as a maid and handy-person for the missionary couple in their large residence located next to the GC Mennonite church building in Moenkopi.

There is actually a long history of GC Mennonite mission work among the Hopi people. GC mission work in the village of Moenkopi was started in 1905 by Rev. J. B. Frey. Some 50 years later, in 1950, shortly before Ruth's visit, there were GC Mennonite congregations in five Hopi villages with a total membership of about 45, not exactly a great numerical success. In a 1984 report, missionary Albert Janzen indicated that there were Voluntary Service units in most of the villages where Mennonite churches were located. A sketch in his report shows that the church buildings looked very much like smaller replicas of the First Mennonite Church in Reedley.

Missionary Janzen's 1984 report reflects little respect for Hopi religious traditions and practices, which he thought were mainly an excuse for "the gratification of their fleshly lusts and immoral practices." Like many other missionaries of that era (including some of our missionary colleagues in Japan), he did not hesitate to use words and phrases like pagan, heathen, darkness of superstition and sin, Satanic powers, occult, and idolatry in his report on how difficult mission work was among the Hopi people. He complained that their religion was pervasive in every area of Hopi life, from clothing, to haircuts, to dances, to the design of their buildings, so converts to Christianity had to cut themselves off almost entirely from their inherited cultural traditions, and this was difficult for the Hopi people (or for anyone else, for that matter) to do. But that is how things were in almost every version of the old world.

Religion and culture were integrated into a coherent whole, not segmented and compartmentalized into “sacred” and “secular” spheres, so “conversion” meant a lot more than just changing ones “religion.”

As I said, Ruth and I decided that on our trip home from Hesston we would visit Kristen, Ruth’s niece, Laurie Schrag’s daughter, who was teaching in the Mission School. Kristen and her roommate were very hospitable to us and we learned a lot about the school and life on the reservation. The Hopi Mission School was established in 1951. It was located just outside the village of Kyqotsmovi (New Oraibi) where GC mission work had begun late in the 19th century. A church building was constructed in the village by the Mennonites in 1910. The Hopi Mission School was initially a GC Mennonite project but by 1984 it was supported by “all” of the churches on the Reservation. We were concerned to learn that the school continued to struggle with finances, frequent turnover in administrative leadership and, later, a protracted legal battle.

After leaving Kyqotsmovi, Ruth and I drove north to Moenkopi, where Ruth had worked as a volunteer more than 55 years earlier. Ruth did not have a clear memory of where the missionary residence and church building were located in the village, which, we quickly learned, had grown substantially. When we entered the newer part of the village, nothing looked familiar to Ruth, since, unlike most of the old villages on the reservation, the streets were laid out in a grid pattern. So we drove down toward the older part of the village, which like all of the Hopi villages that we visited, had signs posted asking visitors not to take photos, make recordings or otherwise disrupt the lives of the residents—so we did not exactly feel welcomed in being there. As we drove into the really old part of the village, we found narrow, crooked streets where we did not feel comfortable at all, and we still saw no sign of the large old mission buildings, so we pulled into a small parking area, turned around, and drove back out of the old part of Moenkopi.

We were perplexed that Ruth could not locate the relatively large old mission buildings that we thought would be easy to recognize among the smaller, Hopi-style structures, so we drove around the newer part of the town until we found an elderly woman whom we felt free to ask about the church and mission residence where Ruth had once lived and worked. The woman assured us that she knew exactly what we were asking about since she had attended the Mennonite church herself for a while and she remembered the missionaries whose names Ruth mentioned. She directed us back down into the old part of the village, to the same parking area where we had turned around just a few minutes before. Ruth had not recognized what had once been Mennonite buildings because they had reverted back to tribal control and new facades had been added to make the buildings look more Hopi style. They looked

nothing at all like the Mennonite church facilities they had once been. We went into a tribal office in the old church building to explain who we were and to ask permission to take a few photos of the buildings. It took a phone call to a supervisor, but we were given permission, so we have a couple of photos of this trip back into Ruth's long-ago past.

The first traditional Mennonite-related people to settle in Arizona were eleven Amish families who arrived in 1908 to establish farms in the part of the "Valley of the Sun" where Phoenix and its western suburb of Glendale are now located. All of the members of these eleven Amish families were related by blood or marriage to three Schrock brothers who were the central persons in this small Amish community. These bonds of kinship were apparently not strong enough to prevent conflicts over baptism and other issues from dividing the group, and this led to the departure of the Amish families back to Kansas and other mid-western states. The last four Amish families left Arizona in about 1916.

Other Mennonite people of varied backgrounds appeared in the Phoenix area as early as the 1930s, primarily for health reasons, since the hot, dry desert climate was believed to be helpful to people who were suffering from TB, asthma and other ailments. By 1944 there were enough Mennonites in the Phoenix area to begin informal meetings which led to the establishment of the first Mennonite congregation in 1946 in the community of Sunnyslope, then several miles north of what is now downtown Phoenix. So the Sunnyslope Mennonite Church (originally MC or "Old" Mennonite denomination, now MCUSA) is the oldest Mennonite congregation in the area. During the decades of the 1950s and 1960s about fifteen additional Mennonite-related congregations were planted in and around what is now Phoenix. Most of these new congregations in an urban area far from the old Mennonite "heartlands" have not fared very well.

There were several reasons for this burst of Mennonite congregation-building in the Phoenix area. First, as was true of the folks who founded the Sunnyslope congregation, many Mennonites first came to the Phoenix area for health reasons. Some stayed to help form the nuclei for the new congregations. Second, some Mennonites, along with many others, moved to the area because of rapid population growth and, therefore, job opportunities. The population of Phoenix in 1945 was about 70,000. Ten years later, in 1955, the population had more than doubled to about 163,000 and 30 years later, in 1985 the population had exploded to about 1.7 million. The population in the Phoenix area in 2013 was about 4.3 million, approximately one half of the population of the entire state of Arizona, making this the thirteenth most populous metropolitan area in the U.S. The population of the city of Phoenix itself in 2013 was about 1.6 million, the sixth most populous city in the U.S. So for several decades the

population was in a pattern of rapid growth and this meant that jobs were available in construction and other trades and professions, so some Mennonites moved to Phoenix because of the economic opportunities.

A third reason why Mennonites came to the Phoenix area was the Voluntary Service (VS) program of the Mennonite Church. About ten VS units were established in the area during the years 1954 to 1976 and many of these units continued to function until the VS programs in Phoenix ended in 1983. During the 30 years that the VS programs served in the area, approximately 435 Mennonite young people spent time in and around Phoenix. Some stayed on as permanent residents.

A fourth reason for the proliferation of Mennonite congregations in the area was a philosophy of church growth that was advocated by MC mission leader J. D. Graber and others. A slogan that is associated with Graber is, “Each congregation a mission outpost,” so several of the MC (and GC) congregations in the Phoenix area, like many others, were eager to spin off branch congregations as soon as they felt able to do so, a pattern which we also witnessed in Japan. This method proliferates new congregations, but it also guarantees that both “mother” and “daughter” congregations will remain relatively small, and that is what we saw in both Japan and in the Phoenix area. The average size of Protestant congregations in Japan is somewhere around 40 and many of the Mennonite congregations in the Phoenix area were not much larger than that, with average attendance ranging from around 30 up to 100. Sunnyslope was once much larger than this, with average attendance up to about 400, but their numbers declined to fewer than 100 by 2014, a pattern of decline that was apparent in other area congregations as well. Sanctuaries that were once nearly filled for Sunday morning worship services were down to one half (or even one third) their former size. Trinity was the one Mennonite congregation in the area that maintained a substantially larger average attendance, reaching around 350 during the winter months.

And, finally, the climate in the “Valley of the Sun” might have helped alleviate the symptoms of people with asthma and other physical ailments, but it did nothing to cure the “Mennonite disease,” which is a long history of church conflicts and splits. As happened among the Amish families who were the first Anabaptist-related people to arrive in the area, the pattern of fragmentation over issues both theological and practical continued and resulted in some of the many small Mennonite congregations in the area.

Several of these smaller congregations are no longer in existence. For example, it was sad to read that after thirty years of work in a migrant camp located between Phoenix and Tucson, the Friendly Corners

Chapel held a closing service with only six people in attendance, including the long-time pastoral couple. Similarly, in 2013, the MB Pacific District Conference sold the property of the Palm Glen congregation, ending 50 years of investing a lot of time and money in a failed effort to establish a viable MB congregation in the Phoenix area.

Two things make the congregations in the Phoenix area somewhat different from Mennonite churches in other cities. Both contributed to the high level of mobility that characterized much of church life in the Phoenix area. First, MC Voluntary Service (MVS) units were instrumental in the establishment of many of the congregations in the area. As I said, the mission agency of the “Old” Mennonite Church began to send VS workers to Arizona as early as 1954, but most VS units in Arizona were established between 1956 and 1973. VS programs in Arizona ended in 1983, so the various units were in existence over a period of 10 to 20 years. Almost all of the 435 names on the roster of VSers who served during those years are Swiss-South German names (e.g. Bontrager, Eby, Herschberger, Yoder, Zehr) with just a smattering of Dutch/Polish/Russian Mennonite (e.g. Dick, Janzen, Klassen, Neufeld, Willems) and a few other names (e.g. Garcia). Since one of the reasons for the existence of VS programs was to provide places of “alternative service” during the years of “universal” (but for males only) conscription into the U.S military during the Korean and Viet Nam conflicts, I expected that the great majority of VS workers would be men, so I was quite surprised when I discovered that 53% of the persons who served in VS units in the Phoenix area were women. There really was an ethos of “service” in those years. VS was much more than simply an alternative to military service, though for some it was just that, I am sure.

But these Mennonite young people brought with them more than just an ethic of service and a Christian “peace witness” against participation in war. In 1970, only 15% of Mennonites in the U.S. lived in towns or cities with populations of 25,000 or more and virtually all of these “urban” Mennonites resided in small and medium-sized cities like Harrisonburg, Virginia, Elkhart, Indiana, and Fresno, California. Very few Mennonites found their way to megalopolises like New York City or Chicago, so we can be certain that the great majority of the VSers who showed up in the Phoenix area during the decades of the 1960s and 1970s came from farming communities and small towns. They brought with them the residuals of the old-worldly Swiss-Mennonite ethno-religious culture that they had known back at home in small towns in states like Pennsylvania, Iowa, and Kansas, so when they helped in the founding of the new Mennonite congregations in their temporary communities in Phoenix, it was quite natural

that they would replicate in this new environment what they were already familiar with in their home communities.

In the brief histories of the Mennonite congregations in the Phoenix area that I have read, the many contributions that VSers made in the early development of most of these congregations are celebrated. In their work as volunteers the VSers taught school, helped with construction, led recreational and tutoring programs, etc. but they also helped start the early Mennonite congregations. They taught Sunday school classes, sang in the choirs, and helped with Daily Vacation Bible School programs. Some of the VSers found a new home in urban Phoenix and stayed on as long-term residents, forming part of the core of several of the Mennonite congregations in the area, but most packed up and went home when their terms of service were over or when the VS program ended. Either way, the short-term VS workers helped to give shape to the Mennonite congregations in the Phoenix area—and then most left

There is a second phenomenon that helped to flavor the Mennonite churches in the area and that was the presence of the many “snowbirds” who showed up in the southwest for the winter months when it is cold up in the north, and then they migrated back up to their other homes when the weather in the desert began to heat up. During the winter months it was easy to find vehicles with license plates from places like Michigan, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, and even Manitoba and Alberta in Canada in the parking lots of churches in and around Phoenix. So there were big differences in average attendance during the changing seasons of the year. Attendance in worship services in the Trinity church, for example, averaged about 350 during the winter months and then dropped to about 200 in the summer. Trinity accommodated this pattern by offering two worship services during the winter but only one during the summer months. It is hard to know just what impact this had on the life of the church, but it did complicate planning for facilities and participation in the organizations and programs of the congregation.

Sociologically astute, then 87-year old retired pastor and administrator, Peter Wiebe, suggested an analogy for the state of the Mennonite churches in the Phoenix area. As we watched the removal of several huge old pine trees from the Trinity church property, I asked Peter why the grand old trees were being removed. “When we come here,” he said, “we bring our trees along with us and then several decades later we discover that they do not fit.” And then he continued: “We do the same thing with our churches. We bring our ideas about church from our small-town Mennonite communities in Iowa and Indiana and other places in the Midwest and we expect to repeat the same thing here, only to find

out decades later that they do not fit, either. So we spend much of our time trying to correct our mistakes.”

Nevertheless, Mennonite denominational leaders recognized the potential contribution that the snowbirds and other retired folks might still make, so the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) in Canada and the Mission Network (MMN) of the Mennonite Church U.S.A. (MCUSA) cooperated in a joint program called Service Opportunities for Older Persons (SOOP). The SOOP program in Glendale provided temporary homes in 12 bedrooms in two adjacent houses near the Trinity Church campus. A host couple, who served a one year term, provided hospitality and support for the “snowbird” volunteers who came for periods of two weeks to two months. These “SOOPers” lived in the residences and provided voluntary service in places like food pantries and tutorial programs for immigrants who are learning English as a second language.

There was one Mennonite-related congregation in the area that did not fit the generalizations that I have just offered, and that is the Copper Hills church that was planted some 17 years previously by the Mennonite Brethren in the suburbs way out on the newly developing northwestern edge of the Phoenix metropolitan area. In 2014, the congregation had an average attendance of about 300. They had been meeting in various rented facilities like movie theaters and school auditoriums for all of these years but in 2014 they were in the midst of constructing their own new facilities near the school where they met when we visited their worship service. The worship service, which was held in a darkened school gym with bright spotlights on the “worship team” up on the stage and was devoid of traditional Christian symbols such as a cross, began with a long session of loud (by our tastes) “contemporary Christian music,” and included a thoughtful (by our tastes) sermon by the pastor. The church website and materials that we collected during our visit made no reference to anything Mennonite or Anabaptist, and reports were that the congregation distances itself from any overt connections with any Mennonite-related organizations or programs. Perhaps the pastor was trying to produce a congregation of the “Naked Anabaptists” that Stuart Murray writes about, without any of the historical or institutional baggage that comes with being born and raised “Mennonite,” or perhaps he was just being “seeker-sensitive.” Whatever the intentions might have been, Copper Hills stood quite apart from the other Anabaptist-related communities in the area, as did two other smaller, more recent MB “church plants.”

It has obviously been difficult to sustain a distinctly Anabaptist-Mennonite identity in Arizona, whether through planting a new church in a new location as on the Hopi reservation, or transplanting older forms of church life from the Mennonite “heartland” into the new urban environment in and around

Phoenix. At least we carried with us the impression that congregational life was much more alive and well in central Kansas than what we saw around us in the Phoenix area. Perhaps one reason is that the numbers of Mennonites in the area were not sufficient to provide the “critical mass” and “institutional completeness” that many sociologists suggest are necessary to sustain an ethno-religious identity, so many congregations have struggled in this new environment. Several have lost the battle, closed their doors, and sold their properties. Mennonite values of service to the community inspired several of the congregations to create mission and service programs of various kinds, but most of these programs of service have ceased to exist. One that survived was Goldensun Peace Ministries, and I will next give an account of some of our experiences with that organization.

GOLDENSUN PEACE MINISTRIES

I reviewed the history of Mennonites in Arizona in order to set the context for what we found when we arrived in Glendale on February 1, 2014 and Ruth began her work as Interim Executive Director of Goldensun Peace Ministries. We discovered a complex set of informal, overlapping interrelationships that were reminiscent in many ways of what we had known in our own versions of an old world in Reedley and Fresno and that we also found in Kansas. I will begin with a brief description of the physical locations of the various facilities that were related in one way or another with the Goldensun program because this will provide an introduction to the open boundaries and complicated, overlapping relationships that were typical in the old world, and continued on, to some degree at least, in the neighborhood around the Trinity Mennonite Church and Goldensun in Glendale, Arizona. I am describing conditions as we experienced them in 2014. Many things have changed since then.

The Trinity Mennonite Church was located on the northwest corner of 43rd Avenue and W. Vista Avenue in Glendale. The congregation owned the entire north side of the long block on W. Vista Ave. from 43rd Ave. to 45th Ave. except for the two residences on the west end of the block, both of which were owned by retired Trinity pastor and current Trinity members, Peter (who had once served as President of Hesston College) and Rheta Mae Wiebe. The long block on W. Vista included a neighborhood park that was owned by Trinity and was well used by neighborhood people. The Wiebes lived next to the park and the four bedroom house with pool at the west end of the block was also owned by the Wiebes. This house was leased by the Wiebes to Goldensun, which used the house as a residence for adult men with special needs. Between the two Wiebe residences was a remodeled workshop, known as “The Bridge,” that served as the office for GS and provided a meeting space that was used by Goldensun and various groups from Trinity and elsewhere. Located across the street and

around the corner were the several residences owned or leased by Goldensun, plus guest facilities operated by the SOOP program and a Mennonite-related organization called the Hospitality Services Center. The intention was to create a neighborly supportive environment in which both physical and organizational boundaries would remain as open and cooperative as possible.

Organizational interrelationships were even more complex and unbounded than the physical environment that I have described. Goldensun had informal connections with the organizations I have already mentioned: Trinity Mennonite, Mennonite Central Committee (West Coast), the Hospitality Services Center and the SOOP program of the Mennonite Mission Network of the MCUSA and MCC (Canada) but GS was its own independent legal entity (501(c)(3) with its own self-perpetuating board of directors. GS was also part of an informal consortium of similar Mennonite-related organizations that met periodically under the auspices of the West Coast MCC. GS also related with Gompers, a private organization that provided the sheltered workshops that some (but not all) GS residents attended during the day, and, of course, there were many complicated relationships with the Arizona State Department of Economic Security, Department of Developmental Disabilities (AZDES/DDD) that provided much of the funding that GS used to provide residences and support for its clients and their families.

More complicated yet were the many overlapping personal interrelationships in which GS people shared. Two GS board members were members of Trinity and they were also owners of properties that were leased to GS. Another board member was the parent of a resident in a GS facility, so she had a fiduciary responsibility to act in the best interests of GS as an organization, but she was also very much interested in the personal well-being of her own child. The former GS board chair, a board member, and the former GS director, were long time close friends. The former board chair recognized that these overlapping relationships sometimes constituted a “conflict of interest,” but that is how things were in the old world. **(Photo #40)**

Some of these patterns of overlapping relationships and porous boundaries went back to the values on which Goldensun was founded in the first place. Actually, GS was the second such program that was sponsored by Trinity Mennonite. In 1971, fewer than ten years after the beginning of the congregation in 1963, Trinity initiated (as many Mennonites had done in other times and places) a program of services for the developmentally disabled called Glenhaven (GH). GH was organized as a separate corporation from Trinity but the Trinity pastor and other members served on the board, and GH programs were conducted in Trinity facilities. Much of the staffing for GH was provided by Mennonite

VS workers and volunteers from the congregation, many of whom, at that time, lived in the vicinity of the church. The first service provided by GH was a preschool and during the nine years that GH was in existence many other services were added. When the state funds that made GH programs possible were no longer available, and “As the Trinity congregation grew, the original commitment to Glenhaven began to change,” services were ended and the corporation was disbanded in 1979.

In some ways Goldensun represented continuity with what was started by the Glenhaven program of the Trinity congregation. The original vision called for staff and volunteers to live and serve together with developmentally disabled adults in “normal” family-like residential settings in the neighborhood around the church. The hope was that developmentally disabled adults would be supported by church members who were their neighbors in the community and by VSers, SOOPers, and other volunteers from local congregations and communities. And, insofar as possible, the developmentally disabled residents would, in turn, be integrated into the life of the congregation, contributing their unique gifts to the other members of the church.

Some of that original vision still lived on in the family-like community atmosphere at GS, but the realities were also substantially different from the early dreams. At one time more than 70% of the members of Trinity lived within five miles of the church, but by 2014 more than a majority lived more than five miles away, so for this and other reasons, volunteers from the Trinity church were not as readily available as they once were. Many current Trinity members knew little or nothing about GS. The VS programs of the MCUSA have been in decline so VSers were no longer available to help fulfill the GS vision. SOOPers mostly volunteered their time elsewhere, so many came and went without knowing much about what GS was doing, even though it was centered just across the street. As is true of most urban Mennonite households, in the vast majority of cases both spouses are employed outside of the home, so there is little time and energy left for volunteer work. When we were there, almost all of the work at GS was done by paid staff, few of whom had Mennonite connections and some had no church relationships at all, raising questions about what it really means to be “faith based,” as GS claimed to be.

There was also a complicated history of administrative leadership at GS. The director who preceded Ruth was a woman with an MSW degree who had served on the GS board, but she brought minimal administrative experience to the position. She was a very kind, caring, supportive Christian social worker who invested her body and soul in the ministries of GS, but she did not want to be responsible for the financial dimensions of GS (two board members filled in) and she did not relate well with the

representatives of the Arizona State Department of Economic Security, Department of Developmental Disabilities (DES/DDD) under which GS operated.

One of the former director's decisions illustrates some of the problems with which Ruth needed to deal. Early in 2014 the director opened a second men's residence for only one person, without adequate finances and staff in place. She also made verbal and written commitments to the parents of GS residents to provide services for which GS would not receive compensation from the parents or from the DES/DDD. Because other staff were not available, the director herself moved into the residence, partially as a volunteer direct care worker. In addition to working as many as 120 hours per week, she was also dealing with a variety of personal and health issues. There were fears that the director was on the edge of a physical and emotional collapse. For these and other reasons, the former director did not give sufficient attention to administrative tasks such as developing policies and procedures, providing clear job descriptions, conducting evaluations, maintaining and organizing records and files, etc. so staff members were often not sure what the expectations were, the board did not have the information that was necessary to do its work well, and the state sometimes did not receive the required reports in a timely manner—and the second men's residence was contributing substantially to GS's sizeable deficit.

The board was so concerned about conditions at GS that in 2013 they contracted with Ron and Karen Litwiller from Oregon, who worked under the umbrella of the Mennonite Management Associates, to advise the GS board. The consultants recommended that the GS board appoint an experienced interim executive director who could provide immediate administrative leadership. In checking with the "Mennonite network" of people who were involved in providing services for the developmentally disabled, the Litwillers learned about Ruth's experience as interim director and board member at Central California Mennonite Residential Services (CCMRS) in Fresno, a program very similar to GS, and contacted her in November 2013. After learning what we could from written materials and phone conversations with the Litwillers, Ruth and I visited GS in early January 2014. We decided to accept the invitation, and moved, with what we could carry in our Prius, to Glendale on February 1, 2014, with the understanding that Ruth would serve for a period of not less than three but not more than ten months, depending on when the GS board would appoint a new, long-term executive director.

We rented a fairly new house from GS that was across the alley from the SOOP house and next to one of the GS residences for a group of women clients, so we were located near the center of all of the "action." We were a bit surprised to find a group of GS staff and board members in front of our new

residence as we drove into our driveway for the first time. They must be really hospitable people to welcome us like this, we thought. But, no, they were actually there to repair the broken front window that someone had used to break into our house. Welcome to Glendale! But the house was conveniently located, comfortable, and far more spacious than we really needed. And the air conditioner worked very well!

Shortly after our arrival, the board decided that it was important to bring “new blood” into the board since term limits had been ignored and the same people had served as board members for the entire ten year history of the organization. The board chair resigned. Respecting term limits meant that several long-time board members would be replaced by new people over a period of time, and the board began a process of internal organization that would provide stronger support for the executive director in the future.

As was true of the trees on the Trinity campus, there were many things that had been “planted” at GS that did not fit the new financial, legal, and administrative environment. For example, GS followed the advice of people who might have been looking out for their own financial advantage when they suggested that GS obtain licensing by the state of Arizona as an Individually Designed Living Arrangement (IDLA) rather than as a group home, which is what the consultants were operating as their own for-profit business. The basic idea of an IDLA was that fairly high functioning special needs adults, their parents or guardians, the Arizona state DES/DDD, and a vendor (in this case Goldensun) contracted with each other to provide support for the residents in a shared home, and then all of these parties collaborated together in making decisions about living conditions and other arrangements. Parents or guardians were expected to play a strong role in the IDLA system, such as providing transportation to medical appointments and filling in in times of illness. The role of the state was limited to providing financial support for staff to help residents achieve “habilitation” goals as agreed to by all of the parties involved. Parents/Guardians paid rent and food costs. The state did not pay for round-the-clock care since residents were expected to be fairly self-sufficient.

An arrangement like this was an administrative nightmare at best, since multiple actors were given a “voice” in decision making. Suppose, for example, that one resident decides not to join the others in eating out in a restaurant. Who provides the meal and supervision for the resident who chooses to stay at home but is not able to prepare his/her own meal? Who provides transportation for medical appointments or to attend church when the parents are out of town or otherwise unavailable to fulfil their responsibilities?

Several things happened at GS that compounded these complexities. First, most GS residents were not “high functioning” so they needed more support than was being funded by the state under their IDLA arrangement. And, the former director had promised some of the parents that GS would provide incidental transportation (e.g. to the resident’s preferred church and for medical appointments), so GS was providing many hours of staff time and other support without compensation from the parents or the state. For this and for other reasons, GS’s deficit for 2014 was projected to be about \$60,000, an average of approximately \$7,500 for each of the eight residents.

Clearly GS was not financially viable under these circumstance. One of Ruth’s big challenges was to figure all of this out, suggest changes, and then to submit the appropriate paperwork to the state. These were only a couple of the *many* challenges that Ruth and GS faced during a difficult time of administrative transitions. Many days my first question to Ruth when she walked, sometimes very slowly, head bowed, into our house for lunch was: “What surprises did you find this morning?” Usually there were some, and they were rarely happy ones.

Sometimes the challenges had to do with the Arizona state bureaucracy. The most dramatic of several such episodes happened during the first week when new director Diane Yoder was “shadowing” Ruth to learn some of the details of her new job. A family had been working for six months to negotiate details so that their son could be admitted as a resident in a GS men’s home (because “There is no place like Goldensun anywhere,” they said.). On a Tuesday afternoon the several parents who would be involved (since this was an IDLA and parents have a lot of say in decision-making), GS administrators, and three representatives from the state DDD met to discuss what GS people expected would be the final details before Bill moved into his new residence. But, no, the Arizona DES/DDD representatives announced that everything was off. Bill would not be moving into the GS residence. Needless to say, the parents, Ruth, and Diane were dumbfounded. How could this happen after everything had been negotiated over a long period of time? The next afternoon the person at the next higher level in the administrative hierarchy in the DDD returned Ruth’s phone call to tell Ruth to forget everything that had happened the day before. There had been some miscommunication in the department and Bill had been cleared to move in at any time. As I said, I hear a rising crescendo of frustration with how many bureaucracies are functioning (or mal-functioning) these days.

The search for a new executive director did not go all that quickly or smoothly, so our stay in Arizona extended much longer than originally planned, but finally, Diane Yoder accepted the board’s invitation to serve as executive director of Goldensun. In typical old world Mennonite fashion, Diane came with

many “connections” already in place. Diane’s husband, Mark Yoder, had been a student and then men’s basketball coach at FPU, so we first learned to know them in Fresno many years before. She and Mark had both worked at Hesston College, so we crossed paths with them again during our year in Hesston. We met Mark’s sister, Sheila Yoder, at Trinity Mennonite Church where both she and husband, Ed Zuercher (Phoenix city manager), were active in church leadership. So this family connection was one reason that the Yoders considered a move to Phoenix (plus, like many residents in the area, they were tired of mid-western cold and snow), so when Mark was offered an attractive nursing position in the Phoenix area, their decision to move was finalized. Diane remembered that many years ago when Pastor Peter Wiebe and family moved from Hesston (Diane’s home town) to a different pastorate, young Diane and her family bought a horse from the Wiebes. Small world, again.

Another thing that still remained from the old world was the availability of personal and family stories about others in the close circle of fellow Mennonites in the area. Much personal background information was shared by at least some of the senior members of the community. As in other small communities in both the old and new worlds, sometimes sharing personal and family information seems a bit too much like gossip, but often the information is shared in a context of genuine care and concern. Either way, knowing about past generations of family history, including tales of social and religious alienation and physical and sexual abuse, complicates relationships and decisions that, on the surface, seem to be relatively straightforward. It is often easier if the personal information is left out of the equation, as is most often the case in the new world where such information is mostly off limits. It is almost always easier to treat persons as abstractions (e.g. as a military I.D. or Social Security number), or as simply occupiers of bureaucratic statuses and roles (“cogs in a machine”), than as real live human beings, each with his or her own unique personal and family realities. This, too provided part of the context for Ruth’s work.

Several uncertainties made the long-term viability of GS anything but secure. Changes in Arizona state funding led to the demise of the earlier Glenhaven programs and the same thing could still happen to GS. Staffing was another challenge. Mennonite VS workers were no longer available and volunteers from Trinity and other local churches were not as readily available as they once were, so almost all of the work at GS was done by paid staff. Since the pay was low with few benefits, finding appropriately qualified workers who would stay long-term was not easy. The Trinity congregation remained supportive but relationships with Trinity people were mostly occasional and ad hoc.

It would not be unreasonable to ask whether it is really worth the huge amount of effort and expense that it takes for Goldensun to survive and, hopefully, move forward in the future, especially since the entire organization was serving only eight residents (increased to nine just prior to our departure, with more new additions since then, to a total of twelve in the fall of 2015 and sixteen by the end of 2017). The main positive response to this question was in the quality of the services that GS provided for its residents and their parents and caregivers. It was always tremendously gratifying to see how these special needs persons, their parents and guardians, and many of their support staff loved and cared for one another. The size and commitment of the supporting community was apparent in the monthly community potluck dinner (“carry-on” is the term used by many.) in the Trinity social hall. As many as 60 persons gathered for these happy events, including residents, parents and other family members, guardians, staff, board members, and supportive friends of GS.

It was also easy to see the reality of GS as a supportive community in the many hugs, pats, and other gestures of affection, and in the mutual care and support that this community of people provided for one another. Of course there were also conflicts and compromises, but, for the most part GS represented a lot more than just a job for the staff, and certainly a lot more than just another charitable cause for the home owners and many others who stood ready to help support what GS was doing. No one connected with GS was content to simply provide protective or custodial care (“warehouse”) for the residents. The goal was to provide a supportive, family-like community context that would help each individual realize all of the human potential that he/she was capable of achieving. Producing a profit was not part of the equation. Service was the reason for the existence of GS. One of the gratifying rewards was seeing the unguarded joy with which many of the residents both gave and responded to attention and affection. Unlike us sophisticated “normal” people, most of the “special” people were not “cool” enough to disguise their emotions. Nowhere was this more apparent than in the genuine enthusiasm that showed through their smiles during birthday and other celebrations. We were convinced that GS was doing a really good thing.

So for nearly ten months Ruth and I experienced life in the Phoenix area with a small community of people way out on the margins of the Mennonite world, far from historic Mennonite centers such as are to be found in places like Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Kansas, and, even, Central California. Most of the people we learned to know in and around GS brought with them both trees and values from contexts that were very different from what they found in a major American city like Phoenix in the

Sonora desert. Many of those old values no longer fit very well in this new urban context, but while we were in Arizona we enjoyed being part of what was still left from that old world.

I mostly stayed retired during our nine month sojourn in Arizona, though I did appoint myself as the uninvited, unpaid, part-time, volunteer “administrative assistant” for interim executive director Ruth, which meant that I occasionally helped with documents and other tasks at GS. I also picked up more than my usual share of housework and meal preparation. I tried to go for a walk most days, but I gave up on that during the hottest of the summer months. Mostly I used a lot of my time to continue researching and writing these memoirs. I spent a fair amount of time reading, mostly books from the Trinity church library, which, of course, included a lot of material about things Mennonite. This is one of the reasons these memoirs have gotten to be so long. I learned many new things about Mennonites here and there so I kept adding comments about the larger context of my own personal pilgrimage.

I also complained about the weather almost year-round. During the winter months, every day was very much the same: blue sky, tepid temperature, low humidity. Too boring, I complained. In about mid-May the heat arrived. From then through most of September, almost every day the high temperature was 100+ (116 was the highest) and the lows were mostly in the mid-80s, and often higher (a low of 92 one night). When the Monsoon season arrived in August, it brought occasional rain and thunder storms. The humidity went up but the temperature did not go down. I eventually started complaining about the weather after we returned to Fresno, but it took a while.

But I must confess that there are some very amazing things about the desert area that remain unforgettable: spectacular sunsets and cloud formations, and blossoms on cacti that look like they cannot possibly be real, but they are. As has been the case in each of the many places where we have lived, our lives have been greatly enriched by the new friends we enjoyed learning to know. Our near neighbors, retired pastor Peter and wife Rheta Mae Wiebe, both beyond their mid-eighties, stand at the top of that list, but there are many others, almost all with some kind of connection with the Goldensun community.

We took advantage of our presence in a part of the US that was mostly new to us to explore some of the local sights in and around Phoenix and nearby cities and towns. We visited the “enchanted” town of Sedona with Terri and Dan when they joined us for a visit. We also drove down to Texas to revisit the old haunts in San Antonio where I did my basic and medical training during my army days nearly 60 years before. I recognized some of the sights in Fort Sam Houston, but many things had changed. We also enjoyed visiting Galveston, the place where Ruth’s father and the rest of the Neufeld family

had arrived in the U.S. from Russia (via Germany) in 1911. Galveston was a center for processing new immigrants, like Ellis Island in New York and Angel Island in the San Francisco Bay. None of the original buildings remain, but there is a small museum and the records of the arrivals of ships and passengers are available. It was fun to find the names of the Neufeld family on the passenger list of the U.S.S. *Frankfurt* on which they arrived in the U.S. from Bremen, Germany on August 19, 2011. For some reason, Wilhelm Neufeld's occupation was listed as "Trader." So our time in Arizona was not all work!

Finally, one way to characterize Ruth's contribution at GS is to say that, as she had done with the board of our condominium HOA and other organizations, she helped GS transition from the informal relationships and flexible procedures that fit in the old Mennonite world of shared culture and overlapping social relationships to the more rational, formal, bureaucratic policies and procedures that are necessary for institutional survival in the new. She helped GS add a more business-like rationality ("head") to the "heart" on which the organization had been built, and for this the board and most members of the staff and larger supporting community were so grateful that Ruth was embarrassed by the many expressions of gratitude and praise that were sent her way. Not everyone shared in this enthusiasm, however. One long-time staff worker resigned because he did not appreciate the new, tighter structures that felt to him too much like what Max Weber had called an "iron cage." He preferred the old "flexibility," he said. So of course there are losses as well as gains in making this transition from the old world to the new. One might hope that some of the valuable interpersonal relationships from the old can still be carried forward in the transition into the new, but, unfortunately, the record of successfully accomplishing that is not really very good, often for good reasons.

DIGRESSION: MENNONITES IN EUROPE

Since Europe was the location where the Anabaptist and Mennonite stories began, and it is where our own family stories originated, it might be appropriate to reflect briefly on how our distant cultural and spiritual kin who remained behind have fared in a Europe that has become increasingly "secular" and "post-Christian." There are some observers who think that there is something "exceptional" about the religious situation in America since rates of belief in God and church membership and attendance remain much higher than in Europe, but there are also many who think that the "secularization" that has happened in Europe (and in Canada) is what lies ahead for the U.S. I am specifically interested

here in the story of what happened to our Mennonite kin in Europe. (Much of what follows has been informed by John Lapp's *Testing Faith and Tradition*, 2006.)

Almost all of the Mennonites in Europe have suffered a lot of tragedy. There were once thriving communities of Amish Mennonites in various parts of Europe, but there have been no Amish people in Europe for 200 years. They all left for North America or assimilated into other Mennonite communities. There were once large and prosperous Hutterite communities centered in Moravia, but they, too, were forced to leave or change their practices so there are no traditional Hutterite communities left in Europe.

As I said, Stalin killed or scattered virtually all Mennonite and other ethnic German people after WW II when they had made the mistake of welcoming the invading German military into their districts (as they had done once before during WW I), so there is essentially no remnant at all of the once-flourishing Mennonite colonies in what is now Ukraine and elsewhere in Russia. One guess is that there were fewer than 1,000 ethnic Mennonites in all of Russia in 2004. During our historical tour of the former Mennonite colonies in Ukraine in 1997, we were introduced to an elderly woman who was reportedly the only ethnic Mennonite left in the entire area, and she was allowed to remain only because she was married to a Russian and her services as a nurse were needed. We all stood in a circle and sang "Gott ist die liebe" (God is love) in German with her. Neither is there any Mennonite presence in what is now Poland since Mennonites began to emigrate to S. Russia and other places under political pressures during the late 18th century, and the final remnant either died or left during or just after WW II. They are all gone.

Mennonites do continue to survive in South Germany, Switzerland, and in France, but mostly in small congregations in small villages and farming communities where they are mostly religiously pious and culturally conservative, *die stillen im lande* (the quiet in the land). Their numbers are small and declining.

The story of the Mennonites in Holland (the *Doopsgezinde*, or the "Baptism-minded" as they prefer to call themselves) is a somewhat different matter. The government ended religious persecution in the Netherlands earlier than other places in Europe and formally allowed religious freedom in 1796, after which the Dutch Mennonites were permitted to more openly practice their previously prohibited Anabaptist faith. Like other Christian communities, the Dutch Mennonites were then free to construct their own buildings and conduct their worship services in public. Dutch Mennonites were also allowed to participate fully in mainstream social, economic and political activities, and many became well

educated, wealthy and influential citizens of their society. They served as members of parliament, as cabinet secretaries (including a secretary of the navy) and as mayors of major cities. They were leaders in Dutch commerce, academics, and the arts. We recently learned that Mennonite artists played leading roles in the “Golden Age” of the arts in Holland during the 17th and 18th centuries. For example, there is a lot of evidence that Rembrandt was a Mennonite and, later, a Mennonite was a teacher of the Dutch artist, Vincent Van Gogh.

The *Doopsgezinde* tended to be more urban and were more rational and liberal in their approach to the Christian life than their co-religionists in the south. They formulated their own Dordrecht confession of faith in 1632, and they established their own seminary as early as 1735. They constructed fine places of worship, published their own hymnals, and installed the first pipe organ in one of their church buildings in 1765. Women were permitted to vote in church elections and to serve in church ministries earlier than was allowed by Mennonites in most other places. In 1939, 12 of 102 ministers were women and in 1940 one third of the students in the seminary were women.

The Dutch organization that provided assistance to Swiss and other Anabaptists who were still suffering under persecution and other disasters was only one of many organizations that were important in the life of the Dutch Mennonites. They founded their own mission board in 1847, after cooperating with the Baptists at first and then, because the Baptists insisted on baptism by immersion, they collaborated with fellow Mennonites in Germany and Russia. One of their important mission fields was in what is now Indonesia but was a Dutch colony at the time. One of the missionaries to Indonesia whom they supported was Heinrich Dirks, a Russian Mennonite who was related to Ruth’s family.

Dutch Mennonites have been more ecumenical than most Mennonites, cooperating with Lutheran, Reformed, and Roman Catholic Christians and they were early members of the World Council of Churches (WCC), as well as the inter-Mennonite relationships that they maintained through the Mennonite World Conference (MWC) and other organizations such as the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC). They had few contacts with Baptists and other evangelical organizations.

From the 1780s on, the *Doopsgezinde* had largely given up their Anabaptist traditions of peace and non-resistance. Many supported the French Revolution and were willing to enter military service to further the interests of their nation. Controversies arose when seminary students entered military service, but the matter was resolved by taking the position that whether church members chose to enter military service or not was a matter of individual conscience. As Hitler came to power in neighboring Germany, their official position was that the Kingdom of God is “not of this world,” so they took no

particular political stance. Persons of all political persuasions were welcome. During the war, though, many Dutch Mennonites participated in resistance movements against the Nazis and provided aid and shelter to Jewish people. After WW II, the Dutch Mennonites worked to recover their Anabaptist heritage of peace, forming their own organization to promote a “peace witness” in cooperation with the MCC and other like-minded organizations.

By that time, though, the influence of Mennonites in Dutch society had declined substantially, along with shrinking numbers of members. John Roth reports (in *Stories*) that in 1700 there were 160,000 Mennonites in Holland, nearly 10% of the entire population. By 1830 that number had fallen to 30,000, and in 2003 there were only about 11,000 members left in Dutch Mennonite churches, a pattern of decline that mirrors what was happening in many other Christian church communities in many European societies.

It should be clear by now that one thing that set Mennonites apart from whatever society they found themselves in was their refusal to participate in the military. But it is also clear that pacifism was the occasion for conflicts within the Mennonite communities as well as with the political and religious authorities of the various states in which they resided. By no means did all Mennonites share the same convictions about participation in war. This was true in Germany where the state took on a particularly perverse form under the rule of Hitler and the Nazi party.

The Mennonites in Germany did not really share one common history. Many of the Mennonites in the North were much like their neighbors, the *Doopsgezinde*, in the Netherlands. They were urban, professional, wealthy, influential in German society, and rational, liberal and ecumenical in their churchly life. But there were differences, too, such as serious cultural and religious conflicts between the Frisian and Flemish subgroups who did not hesitate to excommunicate members who crossed over between the two groups in marriage or even just visited churches of the other group, and there were pious Mennonites who did not support what their more liberal fellow Mennonites were doing.

There were two groups of Mennonites in South Germany, one in the east and one in the west, both of which were mostly rural, isolated, religiously pious, and culturally conservative, with close ties with the Swiss Anabaptists. Each of the three groups in Germany had their own organizations and there was little interaction between north and south until after WW II when a new organization (the AMG) provided an umbrella for communication and cooperation between the “three pillars” of the Mennonite churches in Germany. So it is not possible to make generalizations that apply to all. But the numbers are small and declining, from about 18,000 in 1953 to about 5,700 in 2005.

One of the points of contention in Germany as elsewhere is the extent to which Mennonites should “assimilate” into the mainstream society. Answers varied between and within congregations, since German Mennonites valued congregational autonomy and any overarching organizational structures were either weak or non-existent. At one extreme were Mennonites like Hermann von Beckerath (1801-1870), a wealthy and influential German banker who was a member of parliament and served for a time as minister of finance. He advocated the complete assimilation of Mennonites into German society, including the end of any special exemptions from military service. He was a member of the large, wealthy and progressive Krefeld congregation which had abandoned any pacifist convictions by the beginning of the nineteenth century. Of course there were other voices, too, such as the Ibersheimer Statement formulated in 1803 by a group of south German ministers calling for the rejection of military service, but this had little effect since German Mennonite pacifist convictions continued to weaken during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Mennonite participation in WW I was widespread, with some 400 German Mennonite men dying in the service of their country. Germany lost that war, but this did not dampen the enthusiasm of most German citizens, including many Mennonites, for their Fatherland. So when Hitler and the Nazis came to power in 1933, it was easy for many German Mennonites to welcome what he represented. He called for personal sacrifice in the cause of a greater national common good, something that sounded somewhat familiar to Christians, who were concerned about the growing individualism and materialism in German society. Hitler called for correction of the injustices that many Germans felt had left their country in a weakened condition at the end of WW I. He promised jobs, jobs, jobs, for the many Germans, including Mennonites, who had lost their farms and businesses and were unemployed. Many Germans were also suspicious of democracy, which did not seem to work effectively, and they welcomed a return to strong, centralized governmental leadership. Hitler promised expanded borders for Germans who felt that their territory was over-populated. And he represented resistance to the Soviet Communists, something that was particularly appealing to Mennonites who had seen some 30,000 of their co-religionists escape into Germany from the horrors of the Revolution in Russia. Hitler’s “Third Reich” made the “German Race” feel strong and proud again.

Most North German Mennonite church leaders called for support of the “people and the state” as the duty of every Christian and they promised the Nazi authorities that if the draft were reinstated, the Mennonites would not ask for exemption from military service. Ministers in the South were a bit more cautious, issuing a statement that indicated that they still upheld the principle of conscientious objection

but that concrete decisions about military service would be left to each individual. There were voices in Mennonite periodicals that tied the peace tradition to Jesus' command to love our neighbors and even our enemies, but others argued that destroying an enemy could be virtuous if it was done out of love for one's own family and people. The state, after all, was a gift from God and deserved the support of Christian citizens. Many Mennonites adopted the "just war" position that war could be "just" under certain conditions, such as in defending one's self and one's own, and, sometimes, to prevent an imminent aggression.

In his autobiography, Mennonite historian and church leader, Robert Kreider, reports an encounter with Benjamin Unruh (d. 1959), an important Mennonite leader in Russia, Germany, and both North and South America, that happened during a bicycle and hitchhiking tour of Europe that Kreider did in 1938, shortly before the outbreak of WW II. Unruh undoubtedly expressed sentiments that were widely shared by many German Mennonites in those days.

He (B. Unruh) spoke at length of the disreputable financial activities of Jews. The only alternative, he felt, was what Hitler did: suppress them... Unruh, a big man with flowing white hair, went on: 'Hitler is a good man. He is more generous than anyone Germany has known. He is a simple peasant boy who hates no one, like Menno Simons. He loves Germany and he loves the whole world. Hitler doesn't want war. Hitler is like your George Washington.' At that point he leaped up and saluted and declared, 'Heil George Washington. Heil Hitler.' (236)

Benjamin Unruh was not alone in holding attitudes like these. Recent historical scholarship has shown that sympathy and support for the Nazi regime was far more widespread in Mennonite circles in Germany and elsewhere than previously recognized, including Mennonite complicity with the Nazis in the Jewish holocaust. Mennonites in Germany and elsewhere are currently struggling with how to come to terms with this dark chapter in their history.

Any open debates about these issues came to an end in 1935 when the Nazi government began to put more pressure on the churches. German Mennonite periodicals no longer addressed political topics and church services focused on "spiritual" matters. Political issues were no longer on the agenda. German Mennonites declined to participate in international inter-Mennonite meetings about issues related to peace. When South German leader Christian Neff published a critical article as war loomed in 1941, the periodical was shut down under government orders and Neff was forbidden to publish any further statements. Everyone was fully aware of the reprisals against persons and families that happened if such orders were not obeyed. Finally, when it came right down to it, "No German

Mennonite refused military service after its reintroduction in 1935.” (*Testing*, p. 128) Some German Mennonite soldiers requested assignments that did not directly involve killing, but no one knows how often this happened or what the results were.

Of course by the time WW II ended in 1945, life in Germany had been turned upside down. Besides the material devastation (e.g. destroyed homes, schools, businesses, church buildings and the infrastructure), hunger and starvation were almost everywhere (though rural areas were relatively unscathed), families and congregations were scattered, and some 20 million refugees crowded the streets of Germany. Included in this massive dislocation of human populations were some 350,000 ethnic Germans who desperately tried to escape from Russia ahead of the German Army as it retreated to the west ahead of the advancing Russians. The refugees traveled on foot and in ox carts. The Russians managed to overtake 200,000 of these fleeing citizens of the Soviet state and they were either killed or returned to labor camps in Russia, where many died. Of the 150,000 who did make it to Germany, the Russians managed to capture 50,000 to 60,000 and they, too, were repatriated to the Russian homeland where they were treated as traitors to the socialist cause. One third died on the way or shortly after their arrival back in Russia. Of the 35,000 Mennonites who fled Russia into Germany as part of this exodus of ethnic Germans, 20,000 were sent back to Russia, along with the many other “traitorous” ethnic Germans. Most of the others eventually emigrated to Canada or South America.

The magnitude of the physical suffering was almost beyond belief. It was to alleviate the material hardships of their fellow Mennonites in Europe that members of the Reedley MB Church of my childhood donated money, raisins and dried fruit that were distributed in Europe by the Mennonite Central Committee. But there were “spiritual” issues to deal with, too. The German people needed to find a way to understand why they had actively supported, or stood by silently at best, as their Nazi government had perpetrated massive crimes against humanity. German Mennonites, in particular, had to ask themselves what had happened to their commitments to the peaceful way of life that Jesus and their own Anabaptist ancestors had called for, and how they should now relate to their fellow Mennonites and others against whom their government had committed grave atrocities. The German Mennonites managed to regroup but the scars remain to this day. The war often remains a taboo topic.

As I said, the numbers of “traditional” Mennonites in Germany have declined from 18,000 in 1953 to 5,700 in 2005. But that is only part of the total picture of the Mennonite presence in Germany. In the post-war years several of the North American Mennonite mission boards (including the MBs) sent missionaries to Germany (and other countries in Europe), with the result that there are now several

networks of recently founded congregations that have few relationships with the older Mennonite communities in Germany. And, when the old Soviet Union became more open and finally broke up completely in 1991, Mennonites who had remained or had been repatriated, began to emigrate from Russia to Germany, where the government provided them with generous assistance, as did their fellow Mennonites in Germany, Holland, North America, and elsewhere.

The numbers of emigrants out of Russia (*aussiedler*) were massive: 2.3 million Soviet citizens who were ethnic Germans emigrated from Russia to Germany during the years 1951 – 2004. Of these, about 12% were German Mennonites and Baptists (The two communities had become closely intertwined in Russia.), so about 280,000 Mennonites and Baptists arrived in Germany from Russia during the years 1965 – 2004, which is one of the reasons why in 2004 almost no ethnic German Mennonites remained in Russia.

By no means did all of these 280,000 ethnic German Mennonites and Baptists from Russia find their way into churches in Germany but some 62,000 did. Of these, about 40,000 belonged to Baptist churches in which 57% of the members had a Mennonite background, and about 22,000 were in Mennonite churches where 80% had a Mennonite background. But virtually none of these immigrant Mennonites joined the older, established Mennonite churches that had already been in Germany for 400 years. The cultural and religious differences were just too great. The immigrants could not believe that in “Christian” Germany where people were free to practice their faith, almost no one attended church, and those who did seemed to be far too “worldly” by Russian Mennonite standards. From the point of view of the Russian Mennonites, the German Mennonites had become far too secular. So they separated themselves from these worldly German Mennonites into 420 of their own new congregations, some of which grew quite large because of immigration, high birth rates, and success in converting other previously unchurched fellow Russian immigrants. Only a meager 1% of the members of the new immigrant congregations were converts from the general population in Germany. The *aussiedler* organized their 420 congregations into 11 different formal and informal networks of congregations, with few points of cooperation between these 11 different organizations.

To be fair, I should note that some of the older groups of Mennonites in Germany have had an impact that is out of all proportion to their small numbers. When North German Mennonite representative to the World Council of Churches, Fernando Enns (no relative of mine as far as I can tell) proposed that the WCC declare the first decade of the 21st Century a “Decade to Overcome Violence,” the WCC accepted that proposal. In retrospect, I am not sure how effective the WCC was in this effort, since

2001-10 turned out to be rather bloody years, but at least the WCC tried, under German Mennonite influence.

A second recent hopeful development is the establishment of a series of Anabaptist/Mennonite Centers in several of the major cities in Europe: Berlin, Brussels, London, Paris. The London Center in particular has served as the center for a network of some 1200 people across the country and into Ireland who consider Anabaptism to be their spiritual “home” but remain as members in their own Anglican and other congregations with a variety of denominational attachments. These are the “naked Anabaptists” about whom Stuart Murray wrote, who share an “Anabaptist vision” but none of the familial and ethnic “baggage” that many of us “cradle” Mennonites carry.

We have had several opportunities to become personally acquainted with Russian Mennonite *aussiedler* who found their way to Fresno, mostly as students. Some worked as employees in Ruth’s OASIS program. Johann Matthies lived in the back apartment in our house on Kerckhoff before his marriage, and Eugin and Marita Hertel lived in our condominium during the months we were in Arizona.

Generalizations are difficult since the Mennonites in Europe are divided by history, nationality, geography, class, theology, language and culture. There have been predictions of the imminent demise of the Mennonites since as early as 1722 when a Prussian minister of state assured his audiences that the Mennonites would soon disappear as they would be completely assimilated into the mainstream society. Of course that has not happened yet, so one should be cautious in making such predictions, but among the traditional Mennonites, the numbers are small and declining and the organizational structures are weak. Both life and history are filled with surprises, but it is hard to imagine that the Mennonites in Europe will find ways to reverse these trends, which they share with many others in this new world. But there are some hopeful signs and the Russian immigrant churches are a new phenomenon the future of which remains unclear, but perhaps they will follow a course similar to what my extended Enns family has experienced. And there is a lot of evidence that religion in America more generally is on a trajectory that is similar to what has happened to Christianity in Europe. We Americans are just somewhat behind.

FROM THE OLD TO THE NEW IN FRESNO AND BEYOND

As I reflect on changes that we see in the institutions that have been so important to us in Fresno and in several other places, there seems to be a common pattern, and that pattern looks a lot like what I

described earlier in my discussion of social change. The two Mennonite colleges with which I have been associated have each in their own way moved away from their Anabaptist-Mennonite uniqueness toward greater conformity to other similar American institutions of higher learning. They are highly organized (bureaucratized), pragmatic in decision-making, diverse in community membership. The congregation that has been important to us for many years is moving toward closer conformity to what is typical in American Protestant congregations: rectangular architecture, centralized leadership with a major focus on worship, and increasingly selective and passive participation by members. The Kerckhoff neighborhood has few of the shared activities that once meant so much to us and our family. The OASIS program is but a shadow of what it once was, disconnected from church and university, and offering only a narrow range of services. In our condominium complex we continue to experience the pattern of social isolation about which many observers of American society have been concerned for a very long time. In Arizona we witnessed and participated in the struggles of Mennonite congregations and the Goldensun organization to maintain some continuity with their religious and cultural past. The fate of church organizations in Europe offers little cause for optimism about what might happen next in our own social and cultural context.

Congregations, schools, neighborhoods, extended families and ethnic communities, are examples of the “intermediate institutions” that once stood between the individual and the large, powerful, impersonal institutions of society, the highly bureaucratized corporations and government entities that Max Weber once said were like an “iron cage.” These intermediate institutions once provided a context of personal care and support that enabled individuals to live in the close interpersonal relationships that have long been considered to be essential for a decent human life. I, along with many others, see a pattern of change that results in a narrowing and a weakening of relationships in each of these settings, and I (and many others) mourn the loss, even as we celebrate the gains in personal freedoms, technological conveniences, and the rich cultural diversity of the new.

I have focused in these memoirs on my own Mennonite ethno-religious context, so I have said a lot about changes in the religious institutions that I have been part of, and I will focus on our family in the section that follows, but I have not paid much attention to the other compartmentalized social institutions that together constitute the larger American social system. If I am correct in saying that specialization and compartmentalization in our society have resulted in dis-integration of the whole as well as in the individual parts as I have experienced them, then we might expect to see similar changes in other institutions, too. I will not go into this in any detail, but I do think we see a lot of dis-integration

throughout our social system. I will list just a few examples. I think there is a broadly shared consensus that American politics have become “dysfunctional.” Political gridlock is celebrated by some, mourned by others. High drop-out rates, low test scores, increasing numbers of people involved in home schooling, and the rise of charter schools might be indicators of disintegration in the public education system in the U.S. The public schools once served as an important gateway into the American middle class, but that middle class is seriously threatened by changes in how the American economy is organized, with high rates of unemployment, part-time employment and underemployment that leave many people at or below the poverty line while a small number (the “one percent”) grow increasingly wealthy and the once dominant middle class decreases in size. And so, as in a human organism, since everything is connected to everything, problems in one social institution affect all of the others, too. As with organs in a body, when one part suffers, the entire organism is affected. It will not suffice to fix one institution at a time, even if that were possible, since it is the whole configuration of relationships that is the fundamental problem.

Some of us are very much aware of changes like these because we have lived in both the old world and the new, so we have a sense of both the strengths and the weaknesses of each kind of social world. It would be nice if we human beings could be wise enough to construct a creative knitting together of the best of both worlds, but, unfortunately, few observers of American society (including me) see anything like that happening. What we do see is the loss of the old world, with all of its warts and wrinkles, and the substitution of a new one, with new strengths and virtues, to be sure, but also with different faults and blemishes that might well prove, in the long run, to be at least as problematic as the old.

All of this has important implications for what Ruth and I have experienced as husband and wife, and as parents with our children in our own little “nuclear family.” Some recollections and reflections on our experiences as we have constructed our own immediate family (in sociological jargon, our “family of procreation”) follow, after a final digression on the surprising and dramatic presidency of Donald J. Trump.

A LONG DIGRESSION: EVANGELICALS, TRUMP AND POLARIZATION

Since completion of these memoirs has extended past the end of the presidency of Donald Trump and into the first months of the Biden administration, I will digress to provide some additional comments about the polarization in American church, politics, culture and society that was exacerbated by the

election of Donald Trump and his tenure as president. I am writing during the heat of continuing political battles between Trump, with his base of loyal supporters, and pretty much everyone else. By the time anyone reads these words, new events will have happened; new information and perspectives will have emerged; and interpretations that seem to be clear now will have been called into question. New conflicts are sure to emerge in both the near and the far future, but this is how things looked to me late in Trump's term and during the early months of the Biden presidency. Since this has certainly been the most tumultuous period of political turmoil that I experienced during my lifetime, and since the situation will have changed by the time anyone reads these memoirs, I will provide a brief review.

INTRODUCTORY REFLECTIONS

On election night, November 8, 2016, Ruth and I were on an overnight flight across the Atlantic, preparing to have breakfast and then descend into the Heathrow airport outside of London, when the captain announced that Donald J. Trump had just been elected as the 45th President of the United States. We were stunned. How could that many Americans vote for a man who, in the virtually unanimous opinion of the fellow Republicans who were his competitors for the nomination and most other traditional Republicans, business people in New York City who knew him well, almost everyone who worked for him before and while he was in office, and, more recently, even his niece, is a con-man who has no scruples against lying whenever it is to his advantage and a bully who uses his power to insult, belittle, fire, and campaign against anyone who gets in his way? The American people, it seemed, were not who we thought they were. We were shocked, again, when we later learned that 81% of white evangelical voters had voted for Donald Trump—and have continued to provide virtually unqualified support for him and his policies, no matter how many times he distorts the truth and tells outright lies, insults anyone who criticizes him, and refuses to admit that he is ever wrong or to apologize for anything—including repentance before God. They supported a man whose record includes multiple bankruptcies, multiple marriages, and too many law suits and sexual affairs to keep track of. Contrary to loud protestations by evangelicals over a period of many years that “character matters” in political leadership, suddenly character no longer mattered. White American evangelicals were not who we thought they were. The purpose of this digression is to offer some reflections on what is, to me and many others, a very puzzling and deeply divisive convergence of interests between Donald Trump and white American evangelicals, including many in our own circle of neighbors, relatives and friends.

No one even attempts to deny that President Trump speaks falsehoods and lies almost daily; insults and belittles women, immigrants, disabled persons, political opponents, former members of his own

administration, and members of minority communities of many kinds; and that his policies have favored the wealthy over the poor, separated children from their families, and been more friendly to dictators and strongmen than with our own historic democratic allies. The recorded evidence is everywhere and the Trump himself boasts about many of these behaviors and encourages others to follow suit. The question is not why a *politician* might adopt behaviors such as this, nor why a portion of the population would choose to support such a person. The real puzzle is why white evangelical Christians, who profess belief in the Bible, the writings of the poets, prophets and apostles, and the teachings and example of Jesus have chosen to support in overwhelming numbers the leadership of Donald Trump.

This question was so serious that the first book-length reflection on the situation of evangelicalism in America after the election of Donald Trump that I read was a collection of short essays edited by Mark Labberton, president of Fuller Theological Seminary. His title was, *Still Evangelical? Insiders Reconsider Political, Social, and Theological Meaning* (2018). “Still evangelical?” had become a serious question because evangelicalism had come to be identified in the public mind with support for Donald Trump and his policies. Evangelicalism had come to mean opposition to abortion and same-sex marriage; a “wall” and other barriers to disrupt the “invasion” of refugees and other undesirable aliens; freedom for Christian institutions (including businesses, schools and colleges) to discriminate in hiring and other actions against persons on the basis of sexual orientations and practices. And, furthermore, the personal character of our political leaders does not matter. This close identification in the public imagination of evangelicalism with the political right raised the question: Is it appropriate to continue to identify as an “evangelical” when the public meaning of the term had been so thoroughly transformed by the close association of white American evangelicals with Trump-ism that it no longer has the meaning that it once did?

DONALD TRUMP: THE END OF DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA?

My primary purpose in this digression is to suggest some explanations for evangelical support for Donald Trump. I will begin with a brief catalog of some of the reasons for opposition to Trump. Many of his supporters are convinced that because Trump’s opponents have a visceral hatred for him they will do everything they possibly can to subvert the legitimacy of his election, destroy his reputation, obstruct his leadership, and end his presidency. His mostly liberal and Democratic opponents refuse to accept his legitimate right to presidential leadership. This is true of the “mainstream media” who spread only “fake news” about him and the “deep state” of professional experts, technicians, and bureaucrats

inside the government who leak secrets and refuse to carry out his policies. Many of his allies are convinced that his critics have such an intense personal hatred for Donald Trump that they did not allow him to govern. Instead, they concocted one “witch hunt” after another, beginning with the probe into relationships between his campaign and the Russian government and ending with two impeachments.

Most of his critics deny that their opposition to Trump is primarily personal. They object to his disregard for historical precedents and the norms and the “mores,” the unwritten and unspoken expectations that come with the presidential office. The president has long been expected to unite, not divide the American people. He (always a male, so far) is expected to speak and act with some degree of dignity and decorum. He is expected to show some degree of respect for traditions and to maintain some continuity with the historical policies of his party. He is expected to appoint a cabinet and other top administrative officers from whom he can receive information and counsel and with whom he can work collaboratively. He is expected to maintain some degree of cooperative relationship with the legislative branch of government and to comply with the established positions that have been decided by the judicial branch. He is expected to develop policies that are consistent with the U.S Constitution and to uphold the laws of the land as decided by the courts. He is expected to make his tax returns public and to refrain from profiting financially from his position as president. He is expected to be truthful with the American people (and to apologize if he is caught lying). Trump has ignored almost all of this.

The results of his presidency, according to his critics, have been devastating. In foreign relations, Trump has acted unilaterally (“America first”), abandoning the Paris Climate Agreement, the Iran Nuclear Deal, and the World Health Organization—in the midst of a global pandemic. He has weakened ties with NATO. His abrupt withdrawal of troops from Syria abandoned our Kurdish allies and created a vacuum that was quickly filled by the Russians and Turks. Dictators Assad in Syria and Maduro in Venezuela remain in power. Kim in North Korea and the Iranians continue their development of their nuclear weapons programs. Russia still occupies the Crimean Peninsula and other parts of eastern Ukraine, and for reasons that are not yet clear, Trump resolutely refused to criticize or confront Vladimir Putin. In fact, he accepted the word of Putin over his own intelligence officials; he ignored reports that Russia has placed bounties on U.S troops; and he openly (and illegally) invited Russian interference in our elections. For these and many other reasons, our allies no longer trust, and

our adversaries no longer fear, the U.S. In spite of his claims that he restored respect for the U.S., international surveys almost unanimously show the opposite.

Domestically, contrary to long-standing Republican support for fiscal restraint, both the budget deficit and the national debt exploded during Trump's presidency. Trump abandoned free trade agreements and imposed tariffs that hurt the economy. Because of his tax cuts and weakened social programs, the already wide gap between the rich and the poor continued to grow wider. He made every effort to end Obama-care but did not suggest an alternative, in spite of repeated promises to offer a "big beautiful plan that will be much better." He promised to protect people with pre-existing conditions while he was in court trying to end those protections. He declared a "national emergency" so that he could shift funds from other parts of the budget to pay for his "wall" along the Mexican border—very little of which has actually been built, and none of it has been paid for by Mexico as promised by Trump. His term as president ended with the "Big Lie" that he, not Joseph Biden, had won the 2020 election. With his encouragement, crowds of his supporters stormed the Capitol in an attempt to stop the process of certifying that election.

THE PANDEMIC OF 2020

Nowhere is Trump's failure to provide positive presidential leadership more obvious than in his response to the global COVID-19 pandemic. Even though he told journalist Bob Woodward that he had been warned otherwise very early in the pandemic, Trump lied to the American people. He first declared that the epidemic was a "hoax" and then he promised that it would disappear "very quickly." He proclaimed himself to be a "war-time" president who would lead the fight against the virus. But then he soon declared that he would accept "no responsibility" for the spread of the disease. When the virus did continue to spread in spite of his repeated promise that it would "miraculously" disappear, he blamed the Chinese, the Democratic governors of American states, the Democratic mayors of American cities, and too much testing. He managed to change mask-wearing, social distancing, and receiving immunization from matters of public health and consideration for the common good into political issues and tests of constitutional (and "God-given") personal freedom. He replaced professional public health experts with his own personal version of matters in press conferences. A comparison of the course of the pandemic in Europe, Asia and the U.S. indicates just how uniquely disastrous the American response was. When cases declined somewhat from the peak in mid-April to mid-June, President Trump and his administration pressured states and municipalities to "reopen," disregarding the warnings of the scientific and public health experts appointed by him. A "surge" in

cases, hospitalizations, and deaths followed. By February 2021, one year after the first known death from the virus in the U.S., nearly 30 million Americans had contracted the disease and the death toll surpassed 500,000. Approximately one-fifth of the total number of cases and deaths globally were in the U.S. (which has just over 4% of the world's population). Scientists and health experts report that a major reason for the huge gap between Europe (and countries in other parts of the world, including Japan) and the U.S. is because of the failure of the U.S. to adopt and enforce uniform policies. Responsibility for this failure rests almost entirely on the president's denials, abdication of responsibility, false hopes, disregard of science, and prioritizing of the economy and his own campaign for re-election over the health of the citizens of the country—though it is clear by now that it is impossible to achieve an economic recovery (or safely open schools) without first dealing decisively with the spread of the virus. President Trump bears the primary responsibility for the unnecessary deaths and suffering of tens (hundreds?) of thousands (millions?) of Americans, and for the resultant economic devastation experienced by millions of people in the U.S. He deserves some credit for supporting “Warp Speed,” a program for accelerating the development of vaccines for the COVID-19 virus, but a recent response when confronted with statistics on numbers and rates of deaths in the U.S. was to promise, against all evidence, that the virus will soon disappear--and a fatalistic “It is what it is.” During the “lame duck” period following the 2020 election, the president refused to take any action or even discuss the pandemic that was surging all around.

THE 2020 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

The tumultuous one-term presidency of Donald Trump reached its chaotic and disastrous climax during the final weeks of the campaign and the period between the 2020 election and the inauguration of Joseph Biden as the 46th president of the United States on January 20, 2021. The 2020 presidential election took place on November 3, 2020. Every indication prior to the election was that the turn-out would be high and that the outcome was too close to predict. As it turned out, Trump received about 74 million votes, more than he had received in 2016 and more any other presidential candidate in American history. But Biden did even better. He received about seven million more votes than Trump. When translated into Electoral College votes, the outcome was 306 for Biden, 232 for Trump. In either case, the official counts represented a “landslide” victory for Biden. Election officials in both “red” and “blue” states affirmed that the vote was accurate and in compliance with the various election laws in each of the 50 states. Each of the legislatures in each of the 50 states, both “red” and “blue,” certified the outcome of the election as reported by their state election officials. On Monday, December 14,

2020, the Electoral College met and cast their votes. The entire process seemed to be decisively clear and straight-forward. Joseph Biden had won the 2020 election.

Except that Donald Trump refused to concede and he continued to repeat a “Big Lie” that he had been promulgating even before his election in 2016. The election process, he said, was “rigged” and a “fraud.” He claimed, with no supporting evidence, that he had actually won the popular vote in 2016 because the three million more votes for Hillary Clinton than Trump were actually cast by “illegal aliens.” For many months prior to the 2020 election, Trump repeatedly claimed that the only way he could lose would be if the election were “stolen” from him by the Democrats. In the name of “election integrity,” Trump supported many efforts to suppress the vote in areas (mostly urban and with high populations of racial minority voters) that would likely support Democratic candidates, including calling into question the legitimacy of mail-in ballots, the accuracy of voting machines, and ballots that were received after midnight, November 3. At midnight on election night, while he was leading in the early vote count as expected, he declared that he had already won the election “by a lot” and that any votes that arrived after midnight were illegitimate and should not be counted, regardless of the provisions of the state laws that governed such matters. He was furious when several TV networks, including Fox News, following normal procedures, declared Biden the winner of the election on the basis of state-by-state vote tallies. In spite of all evidence to the contrary, Trump insisted that he had won the election by “millions of votes,” “by a landslide.” The election had been “stolen” from him. Trump, he declared, not Biden, was the real winner of the 2020 election.

Then followed a two-month period during which Trump made every possible attempt to overturn the legitimately certified results of the election. He begged, threatened and harassed election officials in the “swing states” (e.g. Michigan, Pennsylvania, Georgia and Arizona). The Republican and Trump-supporting Secretary of State in Georgia, the chief election official in that state, secretly recorded an hour-long phone call, later “leaked” to the press, from the president in which Trump insisted that Georgia officials “recalculate” and “find” the additional 11,780 votes that Trump needed to win the electoral votes for that state. This was in spite of the fact that votes in Georgia had already been counted and recounted three times with no substantial changes in the outcome. When no state election officials in any state would comply with his requests to report new vote totals, Trump attempted to convince swing state legislators to refuse to “certify” the results of the election as reported by their state election officials. No state legislature complied with Trump’s requests to refuse to certify the results of the election in their state. Along the way, Trump and his supporters filed approximately 60 law suits in

courts in several states and at various judicial levels, including two in the Supreme Court of the United States, asking for court action to alter the election results in his favor. Each of these court cases was dismissed or withdrawn, because the courts found that the cases had no basis in law nor in factual evidence (except one ruling in Pennsylvania which had no significant impact on the outcome of the election).

Having failed to enlist the support of state election officials, state legislators, or the courts, Trump made one last attempt to “Stop the Steal” and prevent the inauguration of Joseph Biden as the 46th president of the United States on January 20, 2020. According to the U.S. Constitution, the final step in the process prior to the inauguration of the new president is for the incumbent vice president to chair a joint session of the House of Representatives and the Senate during which the vice president receives and then presents to the Congress the results of the vote in the Electoral College. The Congress then votes to certify this report. That joint session of the Congress was scheduled for January 6, 2021. Contrary to the virtually unanimous opinions of experts on the Constitution, Trump insisted that Vice President Pence, in his role as chair of the joint session of the Congress, had the authority to stop the process at that point. When the vice president informed Trump that he had no such constitutional authority (the first time Pence had publically contradicted the president during their more than four years together), Trump was irate.

This brings us to the dramatic and unprecedented events of January 6, 2021. Trump invited his supporters to gather in D.C. on that date for a “Stop the Steal Rally,” which he promised would be “wild.” The organizers received a permit for a crowd of 30,000, but claimed that “hundreds of thousands” actually showed up (police estimated 25,000 – 35,000). Trump encouraged the crowd to march to the Capitol (“and I will be right there with you”) and to “fight like hell.” Other speakers at the rally, including Trump attorney Rudy Giuliani, declared that it was time for “trial by combat.” Several hundred from the crowd marched from the area in which they had a permit to gather, succeeded in breaking through barriers, and completely overwhelmed the badly undermanned contingent of Capitol and D.C. Police who were trying to guard the building and its occupants, smashed through doors and windows, and forcefully occupied the U.S. Capitol building for the afternoon and evening. The goal of the invaders was to disrupt the final step in the constitutional process of a peaceful transition in the office of the President prior to the inauguration on January 20. They wanted to “Hang Pence” because he had refused to “Stop the Steal.” The crowd did succeed in disrupting the constitutional process, because legislators and staff members were forced to flee for their lives just moments before

the angry crowd broke into the Chamber of the House of Representatives. The vice president, elected Representatives and Senators, staff people, and even some family members escaped into offices and other hiding places where some took shelter in restrooms and under tables and desks. They remained hidden for some six hours, while the intruders wrought destruction and searched for the people whom they blamed for not stopping “The Steal.” Order was finally restored when, after not yet fully explained delays, National Guard reinforcements finally arrived, at around midnight, to rescue the beleaguered officials. Five people died and approximately 140 police officers were injured as a result of the melee. The constitutional process was delayed but not denied, because during the early morning hours, amidst broken furniture, shattered glass and other debris, Vice President Pence reconvened the Congress and the results of the election were formally certified, clearing the way for the inauguration of President Biden on January 20—under the watchful eyes of some 25,000 police and military who were on hand to prevent any repeat of the violence.

It will take many years and many volumes of research and analysis before all that was involved in the process that eventuated in the disastrous events of January 6, 2020 can be fully understood, but the role of Donald Trump was surely pivotal. For five years he had nurtured popular mistrust in the election process. For several months before and after the 2020 election, he had repeatedly declared that the election process was “corrupt,” “rigged,” and a “fraud.” After the election, he vigorously and repeatedly promulgated the “Big Lie” that he had won the election, claiming that the Democrats had “stolen” the election and he, not Biden, was the legitimate occupant of the White House for another four year term. There was not a bit of evidence to support any of these claims. They were rejected by election officials and legislators in each of the 50 states, in the Electoral College, in every court where Trump attempted to prove his case, and even by William Barr, his almost always loyal former Attorney General, who stated publically that there was no widespread fraud in the election. Trump had lost the popular vote by seven million votes and he had lost in the Electoral College by a vote of 305 to 232. Nevertheless, Trump refused to concede the election. He refused to welcome the Bidens into the White House. He refused to attend the Biden inauguration. And he took numerous steps to delay and obstruct the work of the transition teams that were attempting to facilitate the transfer of information and responsibilities to the new administration. He withdrew from public view almost entirely, made no pretense of caring about or responding to the raging COVID-19 pandemic, and he ended his tenure in the office by issuing 140 pardons and commutations of sentences, many of which were for associates and supporters.

In the immediate aftermath of the cataclysmic events of January 6, 2021, it seemed clear to Democratic and other critics of Donald Trump that he had just incited an “insurrection” that was specifically designed to violently disrupt one of the most basic constitutional processes of a democratic government: the transfer of presidential authority. In this his critics were initially joined by some of the leading members of Trump’s own Republican Party. For example, Representative Kevin McCarthy, the leader of the Republican caucus in the House, Senator Mitch McConnell, Republican leader of the Senate, and faithful Trump supporter Senator Lindsey Graham all declared that the president “bore responsibility” for what happened on January 6. But, when the Democratically controlled House of Representatives voted to impeach Donald Trump for his seditious words and actions, only 10 Republicans joined in support. At the end of the impeachment trial in the Senate, only seven Republicans joined all 50 Democrats in supporting a guilty verdict. This meant that a majority (57) of the 100 Senators voted “guilty,” but the total was far short of the two-thirds vote that is required by the U.S. Constitution.

It soon became clear that even though all objective evidence indicated that Trump had lost the election, and even though he had been impeached by the House (for a second time) for his role in the attack on the Capitol, his political power over his faithful base continued unabated. Almost immediately the ten Republican members of the House of Representative who voted for impeachment and the seven Republican Senators who had voted guilty were attacked, not only verbally but they and their families were threatened with physical violence, and some were officially sanctioned by their political parties in their home states. More substantially, they would have to face challengers in their next primary elections. Republican leaders who had criticized Trump in the immediate aftermath of the January 6 uprising soon changed their tune. To briefly cite but two examples, approximately one week after the end of the impeachment trial, House Republican leader McCarthy traveled to Florida to make amends with Trump in his retirement home in Florida for his criticism of Trump for his role in the attack on the Capitol. And, second, Senate Republican leader, Mitch McConnell, voted to acquit President Trump in his impeachment trial, because, he said, it was unconstitutional to impeach a person who had already left office. But immediately following the end of the trial in the Senate, McConnell delivered a scathing speech on the Senate floor in which he repeated, approvingly, almost all of the charges brought by the House Democrats. “There is no question, none, that (President Trump) is practically and morally responsible for provoking the events of the day. No question about it.” McConnell declared. But a few

days later he promised to “absolutely” support Trump if he should be the Republican nominee for the presidency in 2024.

Why did many Republican Party leaders “flip-flop” so dramatically, critiquing Trump for his attack on constitutional processes in one moment, and then refusing to even question his “Big Lie” that the election had been “stolen” from him in the next moment? Probably the best answer is that polls indicated that as many as 70% of Republican voters believed Donald Trump’s false claim that had won the election. That being the reality in their support base, 148 Republicans in the House and five in the Senate voted against certifying the election on January 6, even after the “insurrection” in the Capitol, thereby indicating their support for Trump’s “Big Lie.” When confronted with a choice between calling into question the convictions of some 70% of their supporters or acknowledging the clear evidence that Biden had won the election, the choice was easy. With few exceptions, Republicans stayed with Trump.

CONSPIRACY THEORIES, SUPPORT FOR TRUMP, AND WHITE EVANGELICALS

By the end of Trump’s term in office, it was clear that the boundaries between Christian nationalism, white supremacy, the version of popular Christianity to which many white evangelicals adhered, and support for Donald Trump had become blurred, or erased altogether. During the attack on the Capitol, “Trump 2020” banners were waved right next to “Jesus Saves” signs. Conspiracy theories, including acceptance of Trump’s “Big Lie” that he had won the 2020 election and the widely popular “QAnon” movement were also part of the mix. QAnon was a theory spread via the internet and other means that promoted a truly fantastical complex of ideas, including the belief that there was a secret cabal that included the political, economic and entertainment elite in America. These “Satan worshippers” practiced sex trafficking, child pornography, blood-drinking rituals, and other dastardly deeds, including a plot to take control of all of American society. Donald Trump, with the help of the Pentagon, so the QAnon theory went, was secretly preparing for a “Storm,” during which there would be mass arrests of all of the perpetrators of these misdeeds, thereby purging society of the “liberals” and others who were desperately trying to subvert all traditional American “Judeo-Christian” values and substitute “godless socialism” in their place. QAnon and other similar conspiracy theories help to explain the urgency among the crowd that assaulted the Capitol. Trump’s presidency was essential to the “storm” that would save America. Perhaps, the QAnon believers thought, the “storm” had begun on January 6 and more might happen during the inauguration on January 20. But when the inauguration of President Biden came and went without incident, Trump became a former president. As was the case in many previous instances of other failed prophecies, few true believers abandoned their faith in the conspiracy.

New promises and new dates were substituted for the old failed ones. Support for Trump among his die-hard faithful declined somewhat following the January 6 insurrection, but, for the most part, continued unabated.

For example, according to a February 2021 poll conducted by the conservative American Enterprise Institute, nearly one third of Republican voters (29%) and white evangelicals (27%) believed that QAnon theories were “completely” or “mostly accurate.” Among white evangelicals, nearly two thirds believed that there was widespread fraud in the 2020 election (62%) and that Biden was not a legitimately elected president (63%). Furthermore, the peaceful teachings of Jesus notwithstanding, 41% of white evangelicals believed that “if elected leaders do not protect America the people must do it themselves, even if it requires taking violent action.” It is a short distance between beliefs such as this and the invasion of the Capitol to stop the legitimate transfer of presidential authority. If it is true that one of every four persons in the pews of evangelical churches accepts Trump’s “Big Lie” and conspiracy theories such as QAnon, then historian John Fea is surely correct when he says that evangelical leadership “has a lot of work to do.”

People who value the best in American civic traditions often quote Abraham Lincoln’s invitation to be “touched by the better angels of our nature.” Few would suggest that Trump has led the country in that direction. Those who follow biblical and Christian religious teachings note that Trump exhibits almost none of the virtues that Jesus, the prophets, the apostles and the great saints of the church taught and exemplified, and almost all of the vices against which they warned.

Of course the supporters of Donald Trump, including the many white evangelicals who provide approximately one third of his political “base,” see things very differently. Next I will try to describe and then account for this vastly different perspective.

DONALD TRUMP: GOD’S MAN FOR THIS HOUR?

Many white American evangelical leaders point out that all politics are transactional. That means that it is always necessary to exchange some desired outcomes for others that have to be given up. They are purely pragmatic about their reasons for supporting Trump, and, according to their calculations, their support has paid off handsomely. Trump has furthered many of the main items on the evangelical agenda. I will begin by listing four of the big ticket items on the evangelical agenda: First, and perhaps most importantly, they point out that he was the only viable alternative to the election of Hillary Clinton as president, something that was totally anathema to many evangelicals and to hosts of other

Americans—though in the 2016 election, some 3,000,000 more voters supported her than Trump. Second, they celebrate Trump’s support for policies that limit access to abortion. In doing so he has already prevented the in-utero “murder” of countless numbers of unborn children and there is a chance that “his” conservative Supreme Court Justices might overturn *Roe v. Wade*, thereby eliminating the legal basis for a right to an abortion. Third, in the name of “Religious Liberty,” he has found ways to protect and strengthen the rights of Christian churches, schools and businesses to discriminate against LGBTQ and other “outsiders” who, many evangelicals are convinced, do serious damage to the health of families and society in America. Fourth, he supports the State of Israel, something that evangelicals welcome, partly because of one particular reading of biblical eschatology (study of the “end times”).

In these and other ways Trump has reversed, or at least slowed, the long-term slide of American culture into godless “secular humanism.” He visits evangelical schools and churches, attends prayer breakfasts, welcomes evangelicals to the White House, and he cleared “radical” protesters off the streets in front of the White House so he could be photographed in front of St. John’s Church holding a Bible. He is the first president to attend the “Right to Life” gathering in Washington, D.C. He has made every effort to end “socialized medicine” (Obama’s Affordable Care Act) and other Democratic moves toward “socialism.” He has strengthened the military. He has found ways to limit the “invasion” of immigrants, especially Hispanics from south of the border and Muslims, whose religion, he says, is incompatible with American values. He has badgered and cajoled nations such as Mexico, Canada and China, into taking actions more favorable to the U.S. He has withdrawn the U.S. from many of the international entanglements that he says waste American money, reduce American options, and obligate the U.S. in ways that are not to our best advantage. He has eliminated many wasteful “anti-business” environmental and other regulations. The stock market is up and unemployment is down (or at least it was until the exploding pandemic in the U.S. disrupted both society and the economy). He is a strong supporter of the Second Amendment and “Gun rights.” In light of these and many other positive accomplishments, Trump’s narcissism, crudities, obscenities and insults are a small price to pay.

Also, according to Trump favorite, Rev. Paula White and others, Trump is a recently born-again “baby Christian” so it is appropriate to be patient while he grows in Christian character. Besides, according to a point made repeatedly by many evangelical leaders, God has always used people without regard to their personal character to accomplish his purposes. The biblical King David was a person with many faults and failures, including flagrant sexual transgressions and murder to cover them up, but God used him in spite of his faults. And even the pagan Persian King, Cyrus the Great, was called “messiah”

because he permitted the Jewish people to return to their homeland from exile. We are all sinners and we all make mistakes, Trump included. As for his falsehoods and lies, all politicians lie, so there is nothing remarkable about it if Trump lies, too. Sometimes it would be preferable if he used different language, but to have a politician who seems to say exactly what he thinks, without regard for “politically correct” niceties, is refreshing. It shows that he is “real,” “genuine” and “authentic.” And, unlike most politicians, Trump kept his promises to support the evangelical agenda—at least insofar as he has been permitted to do so. It is the *actions* that Donald Trump has taken to “Make America Great Again” and to put “America First” that really count. Another sometimes-heard comment from evangelical leaders is that in choosing Trump, we were electing a president, not a teacher for our Sunday School class. (“We tried that with Jimmy Carter and look what we got.”) In the words of Dallas mega-church pastor, Southern Baptist denominational leader and ardent Trump supporter, Rev. Robert Jeffress: “Frankly, I want the meanest, toughest son of a gun I can find. And I think that’s the feeling of a lot of evangelicals.” It is clear to many evangelicals that Donald Trump, imperfect as he is, is the man God has chosen to use to accomplish his purposes at this moment in history. Those who oppose him fail to recognize God’s work in the world.

SOME HISTORY: FROM PROGRESSIVE REFORMS TO SUPPORT FOR TRUMP

It has not always been this way. Anyone who knows anything at all about the Old Testament knows that the prophets advocated relentlessly on behalf of the most vulnerable members of their community: the poor, widows, orphans, foreigners and strangers. Anyone who knows even a little bit about the New Testament is familiar with the parable of the “Good Samaritan” that Jesus told in affirmation of the kindness of a Samaritan foreigner who cared for an injured Jewish victim of a roadside crime. Most of us know that the 2000 year history of the church includes the establishment of many institutions of various kinds to care for the sick and disabled, widows and orphans, the stranger, and the poor. That story begins in the New Testament Book of *Acts* with a “primitive communism” whereby members pooled their resources in order to make provision for widows and other dependent fellow followers of Christ, and others.

What is not so generally known is that during much of the 18th and 19th centuries in both Europe and North America, many evangelicals were at the forefront of movements for progressive social reforms. In England, evangelical Christian politician and philanthropist, William Wilberforce (1759-1812), was a well-known leader in campaigns to abolish the slave trade. During the “Second Great Awakening” leading evangelist, Charles Finney (1792-1875), among others, advocated for the abolition of slavery

and he was also critical of capitalism. “What are the principles of those who engage in business?” Finney asked. “Seeking their own ends; doing something not for others but for self... The rules by which business is done in the world are directly opposite of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the spirit he exhibited... The maxim of the man of business, in contrast, is look out for number one.” Evangelicals supported the establishment of “Common Schools” because public education offered opportunity for all to have an equal chance for a first step up the social-economic ladder. They advocated for the rights of women. Finney even invited women to give public testimonies in his meetings, something that was very progressive for those times. Evangelicals advocated for prison reform. Prominent minister Henry Ward Beecher (1813-1887) raised funds to purchase rifles to support the abolitionists in Kansas (“Beecher’s Bibles” they were called!). In response to the growing gap between the rich and the poor that came with the Industrial Revolution late in the 19th century, many religious leaders called for greater economic equality. This included evangelicals such as presidential candidate, William Jennings Bryan, who not only eloquently defended a Tennessee law prohibiting the teaching of evolution in public schools during the Scopes Trial (1925), but also passionately critiqued capitalism and called for a more equitable distribution of wealth in the U.S. And it was Congregational pastor Charles Sheldon who first used the expression “What would Jesus do?” in 1886 as part of his critique of the growing gap between the rich and the poor in America. The Prohibition movement was a reach too far, but even this was a reflection of evangelical concerns for the common good. Many evangelicals participated in antiwar activities.

Of course there were evangelicals who did not support efforts toward social reform, because it distracted attention away from evangelism, among other reasons, but American religious historian, Randall Balmer’s conclusion (in Ron Sider, *The Spiritual Danger of Donald Trump*) is that “the dominant nineteenth century agenda was reformist, directed toward the benefit of those on the margins.” But evangelical calls for social reform mostly came to an end when their campaign against the teaching of evolution in public schools resulted in embarrassment in the Scopes Trial. For the next fifty years evangelicals were mostly absent from the political scene, focusing, rather, on building their own institutional subculture including schools, camps, publications, and evangelistic “crusades.”

A long period of evangelical political quietude ended when Rev. Jerry Falwell and others founded the “Moral Majority” in 1979. Prior to that time, efforts to organize American evangelicals as a political force had not been successful. There was no focal issue that inspired evangelical enthusiasm for political activity. Even opposition to abortion was not an issue that aroused the ire of evangelicals until

later. According to Balmer (and others), “Evangelicals considered abortion a ‘Catholic issue’ in the 1970s; the Southern Baptist Convention called for the legalization of abortion in 1971, and evangelical leaders, including W. A. Criswell of First Baptist Church in Dallas, applauded the *Roe v. Wade* decision of 1973.” This long evangelical disconnect from politics changed when President Jimmy Carter, a fellow born-again evangelical, suggested that tax exemptions for racially segregated Christian schools might be a violation of the First Amendment in the U.S. Constitution that prohibits any “establishment of religion.” This provided the catalyst that was needed to motivate evangelicals to move back into political action, but this time the agenda was not to end slavery and racism or to make American society more inclusive, just, and equal, but to protect their own personal and family interests. In 1954 the Supreme Court had ruled in *Brown v. Topeka* that “separate but equal” in *public* schools was unconstitutional. The response of many white Americans, including many evangelicals, was to establish racially segregated *private* schools where *Brown v. Topeka* did not apply. Many of these racially segregated schools were founded as “Christian” schools, so President Carter’s move to eliminate tax exempt status for schools that had explicitly racist policies and practices was seen as a threat to the ability of evangelicals and others to maintain their own private, racially segregated institutions. Of course there were other reasons to establish Christian schools than a racist desire to maintain segregation, but that was the issue that served as the initial catalyst for the mobilization of evangelicals into political action. Prior to 1980 evangelicals voted for Democratic and Republican candidates in similar numbers but by the mid-1990s evangelicals were clearly moving into the right wing of the GOP camp—“God’s Own Party.” That movement accelerated during the first decade of the new century so that by the presidential election in 2016, few progressive Democrats remained in white evangelical circles. The loudest white evangelical voices celebrated capitalism, opposed abortion and the Equal Rights Amendment, supported American wars in Viet Nam and Afghanistan, and advocated for Donald Trump.

Of course there have always been many different understandings of what it means to be a Christian and an evangelical. In the *antebellum* southern states, where slavery, racism, black subservience and white supremacy were built into the social, economic and legal systems, most people were convinced that these systems were Christian and biblical. Many (most?) southerners really believed that they fought the Civil War to defend a way of life, including the institution of slavery, that had been established and blessed by God since biblical times. Disagreements over these and other issues led to separations of Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian and other denominations into southern and northern

branches. Some of these divisions persist to this day, as do the racist ideas and assumptions about white supremacy that are held by at least some of Trump's supporters—and, according to a lot of evidence, by Trump himself.

It is also important to note that not all evangelicals are conservative in their politics. In 2016, 81% of white evangelicals voted for Trump, but that means that about one in five did not. Support for the Republican Party among African American church-goers, many of whom share evangelical convictions, is in the single digits, and support in the Hispanic community is not much greater. There is still such a thing as a “progressive evangelicalism” (e.g. Ron Wallis and the *Sojourners*, Ron Sider, and Baptist sociologist Tony Campolo). Recently there was a significant explosion in the evangelical world when Mark Galli, former editor of the evangelical magazine, *Christianity Today*, authored an op. ed. calling for the removal of Trump from the presidency. Some of the leading evangelicals in Latin America and Asia are very progressive in their social thinking. Evangelicals are not all the same now and they never have been. As we shall see, it is primarily one type of evangelical that supports Trump-ism. Evangelicals in his loyal “base” are mostly white, rural, without college education, and aging.

Which brings us, again, to the question: Why did so many white American evangelicals move away from their heritage of commitment to “progressive” social reforms for a more just and equal society to support for “conservative” candidates and policies, culminating in their unwavering support for Donald Trump?

EXPLAINING THE WHITE EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE WITH THE RADICAL RIGHT

There is no one, single, simple answer to this question. The parable about blind men describing an elephant comes to mind. It all depends on where one stands and what evidence one has at hand. I will offer brief summaries of and comments on the perspectives of only three of the many authors (I have read only a small portion of the huge and growing volume of literature on these issues.) who write about white evangelical support for Donald Trump: John Fea describes three ideas that Trump used to cultivate the support of white evangelicals. The Skillens outline two versions of the American story, one of which many white evangelicals have adopted. Norris and Inglehart use the notion of social location and “cultural backlash” to account for the popularity of Trump and his policies. I will offer a few suggestions of my own on affinities between the popular religious faith of white evangelicals and the leadership promised by Donald Trump.

TRAVELING TOWARD DONALD TRUMP: FEAR, POWER, AND NOSTALGIA

John Fea's *Believe Me: The Evangelical Road to Donald Trump* (2018) is a comparatively readable and even-handed early contribution to the growing library of books and articles that attempt to explain why white American evangelicals so consistently support Donald Trump. Fea is professor of history at the evangelical Messiah University (supported by the Anabaptist-related Brethren in Christ denomination) and an active member of an evangelical congregation, so he writes as an evangelical "insider." Fea's title is an expression frequently used by Trump: "Believe me!" Fea's analysis is organized around three major points: *fear*, *power*, and *nostalgia*. Fea calls *fear* a "staple of American politics since the founding of the republic," and gives some examples: fear of the Roman Catholic Church; fear of the various waves of immigration; fear of modernists and the social gospel. Before and since his election, Trump encouraged fear of Obama as a Kenyan-born secret Muslim out to re-make America into a secular, borderless, socialist society. White American evangelicals have their own additional catalog of fears: easy access to abortion; legalized same-sex marriage; loss of tax exemptions for Christian schools; and "removing God" from classrooms and other public spaces. Behind all of this is the fear that too many Americans are abandoning the "Judeo-Christian values" on which the nation was founded and are moving toward a culture based on godless "secular humanism." Responding to these fears requires a "strongman" president who is able and willing to lead the country back to the Christian convictions on which the nation was founded.

This leads to the second point in Fea's explanation for evangelical support for Trump: a quest for *power*. The evangelical "playbook" calls for mobilizing evangelical voters to support conservative candidates who will use political power to rescue America from its perceived long-term slide into moral decay. Local campaigns for personal conversion was not enough. Electing a "strongman" president who would appoint conservative Supreme Court justices was one of the ultimate goals. Evangelical leaders were disappointed when they exercised their political power in support of Ronald Reagan, Jimmy Carter and the Bush presidents, all of whom failed to deliver on the evangelical agenda. As we have seen, Trump has delivered on many of the items on the wish-list of his white evangelical supporters.

Fea makes the case that *nostalgia* is a third motivator for evangelical support for Trump. "Make America Great Again" implies that there was some specific time in the past when America was once "great." Nostalgia for an imaginary past rather than honesty about history, Fea says, is one response to fear. But African Americans and other minority communities, Fea notes, have no nostalgia at all for

any previous American era. The goal of the evangelical quest to restore “religious liberty” is mainly to protect their own interests, he says. They offer no clear vision for what “religious liberty” might mean in the culturally and religiously diverse society that the U.S. has become. Nostalgia for an imaginary past when America was once “great” has been used as a political tool.

In his conclusion, Fea notes that Trump’s evangelical supporters are overwhelmingly white, male, rural, without college education, and aging. The younger generations are leaving both the Republican Party and their churches in large numbers, partly in response to the fear-induced, reactionary politics of their elders. In the final words of the book, Fea concludes: “It is time to take a long, hard look at what we (evangelicals) have become. Believe me, we have a lot of work to do. Believe me.”

None of this, it should be noted, is rooted in specifically evangelical theology. There is no direct connection between traditional evangelical theological emphases (biblicism, conversion, atonement, and witnessing/missions) and right-wing politics. On the contrary, biblical and evangelical theology calls for hope and patience, not fear. It calls for humility and *agape* love for the neighbor as one loves one’s self, not an unfettered quest for political power. And evangelical theology calls for honesty and appreciation for the long story of biblical and Christian faith, not nostalgia for an imaginary American past. Martin Luther King Jr.’s non-violent movement for justice and equality, Fea suggests, should serve as a model to which evangelical Christians should aspire.

DUELING AMERICAN STORIES

In a brief essay in Sider’s *The Spiritual Danger of Donald Trump*, James W. and James R. Skillen describe two very different versions of the “American story.” These two narratives are sometimes merged into one, but they cannot both be true. Behind each story lies a different understanding of God/god, and it is impossible to worship both at once. As Jesus said, “No one can serve two masters.” Evangelicals, like many other Americans, the authors claim, are of a “divided mind” because they have tried to follow both stories and worship both gods. (Note: The Skillens use the lower case “god” to refer to the deity of American civil religion, reserving the capitalized “G” for the very different “God” of Judaism and historic Christianity. I will follow their practice.)

First, in their personal religious lives, evangelicals profess faith in Jesus Christ for salvation. “In their personal and church lives, most evangelicals have continued to believe and preach the gospel of God’s grace, love, and forgiveness in Christ.” They continue to hold traditional Protestant theological

convictions and they continue to gather with others to worship Jesus Christ. They understand their beliefs and practices to be in continuity with the biblical salvation-story (*heilsgeschichte*).

But they, along with many other Americans, have also inherited another story (myth) that provides an account of the founding of the nation. This is the story of the brave religious dissenters who endured incredible adversity in their escape from the corrupted churches and societies in Britain and Europe in order to create a new free and democratic nation in a New World across the Atlantic. Against all odds, the revolutionary founders heroically left behind those who attempted to keep them subservient to the European monarchs, and then they established a new society based on the conviction “that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these rights are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.” They then constructed an ingenious system of constitutional government with a separation of powers and checks and balances (legislative, executive, and judicial) so that never again would American citizens be subject to the dictates of any autocrat.

From early on, these two stories merged, both using biblical images and metaphors. America is the “New Israel,” a “Chosen People,” specially called and divinely blessed to build a “New Jerusalem,” a “Shining City on a Hill” to be a light for all peoples, “the last, best hope for mankind.” The founders had escaped from the European “Egypt” in an “Exodus” across the “Red Sea” of the Atlantic to a new “Promised Land,” a “New Eden” in the new “Canaan” in the American wilderness. Their “Moses” was George Washington. “For most white Anglo-Saxon Protestants (WASPs), these two ‘salvation histories’—one for the church through Christ for eternal life, and the other for the world through America for earthly fulfilment—seemed to fit together hand in glove.” They were like “one wagon pulled by two horses.” Only in America, Mark Noll says, were Protestant faith and a “civil religion” united to form one single narrative. So the story moves from saintly community, to American patriotism, to manifest destiny, to American empire.

The merger was not really complete, however. White evangelicals were left with a “divided mind.” On the one hand, in their personal and family relationships, it is appropriate to follow the teachings and example of Jesus to be loving and kind, forgiving, and, even, “to turn the other cheek.” But, to quote Baptist pastor and Trump supporter, Rev. Robert Jeffress, again, “while scripture commands individual Christians and churches to show mercy to those in need, the Bible never calls on government to act as a Good Samaritan.” On the contrary, god “gives the government the authority to do whatever, whether it’s assassination, capital punishment or other punishments of evil... God has endowed rulers (with) full power to use whatever means necessary—including war—to stop evil.” According to the Skillens,

this means that “American citizens, including Christians, should live as followers of the god of war who has chosen now-threatened America to lead in the history of god’s purposes on earth.” Because this god has chosen Donald Trump to lead the battle against evil, to “Make America Great Again,” Rev. Jeffress says that “his moral failings are irrelevant.”

African Americans live with a very different version of the American story. The metaphors are the same, but they are used to tell an entirely different narrative. “Egypt” is not Britain and Europe but slave-holding, Jim Crow, KKK, white supremacist, systemic racist America. “God’s Chosen People” are African Americans and other outsider groups who are oppressed in America, not slave-owning, racist white Protestants. “The Promised Land” might be realized in one of two ways: in the heavenly realm after death, or it might be in fulfilling the American promise of justice and equality for all in the here-and-now. But any new “Promised Land” for African Americans cannot be located in a far-away geographic “New World” because there is no place to escape to in a new “Exodus.” To continue the biblical analogies, Martin Luther King Jr. might be considered to be a new “Moses,” a new “Prophet” gifted by God to lead his oppressed people in a new, non-violent “Exodus” movement that moves America away from its racist past forward to a new “Promised Land”--“the formation of a more perfect union” in which “all of God’s children” are treated with equal dignity and respect. Any new “Exodus” must be away from the injustices of the past forward into the future of justice and equality that is the American promise. This is a very different story from Trump’s vision of an America in which WASP culture and values are being restored “again.”

The authors note that both visions call for a strong government. They cite evidence that there has been a growing attraction over a period of fifty years on the part of many conservative Republicans for a stronger executive branch in the American government. Behind many of the actions of the Trump administration in refusing to cooperate with the legislative branch and in criticizing the judiciary is an interpretation of Article Two in the Constitution known as the “Unitary Executive.” We first heard this term in the movie, *Veep*, about Dick Cheney, George W. Bush’s vice president. In Trump’s interpretation of this notion (and he is apparently supported in this by his Attorney General, William Barr, and other conservative voices), the president is completely immune from any investigation or prosecution for any crime, since the executive functions of the government reside in his person. He has every right to withhold all information from any legislative or judicial investigative body, and to fire any Inspector General, or any other person in the Department of Justice, or in any other part of the executive branch of the government who seeks to inquire into any possible presidential wrong-doings.

As candidate Trump declared during the 2016 campaign, he could shoot someone on Fifth Avenue in New York City in the middle of the day and his base would continue to support him. He is the “strongman” president of Pastor Jeffress’ dreams. Trump attempted to use his almost unlimited powers, unchecked by subservient Republican legislators who are fearful of attacks by Trump and his loyal voters, to move America back toward the WASP hegemony of the “civil religion” version of the American story.

For many African Americans, the federal government is not “the problem.” In many ways it is the “solution.” The federal government provides support for the realization of the freedom and justice promised in the founding documents. The Union Army ended slavery. The Supreme Court ended Jim Crow laws, including making segregation in public schools and other public spaces illegal, and then the federal government provided enforcement to end racial segregation—at least some of it. The federal government ended racial segregation in the military. The federal government passed Civil Rights and Voting Rights legislation. Other groups, too, look to the federal government for support for the realization of their civil and human rights: women’s right to vote and to have access to abortion; the rights of LGBTQ people for protection from discrimination and the legal right to marry; the federal Americans with Disability Act made it possible for many people with disabilities of various kinds to have access and to participate more fully in the institutions of society. It is often the federal government that leads us forward toward the fuller realization of “the better angels of our nature.”

I will conclude with a summary paragraph from the Skillens:

Many white evangelicals continue to embrace the civil-religious narrative of the founders... According to these histories, Americans had lived faithfully as god’s chosen people in the beginning, but they strayed from god over time. The nation can only be restored by going back to the garden of its founding. By contrast, the heirs of those who were murdered, enslaved, and marginalized throughout much of American history see things quite differently. The founders interpreted principles of justice and equality so selectively that they applied primarily to white, land-owning men. The founders did not overcome oppression; they simply changed places with their former oppressors. Those whose roots are in the second American exodus story do not want to go back to the founding; they want to go forward to the full realization of the promises of equal treatment and opportunity, and they continue to see the federal government as essential in their struggle.

Again, there is nothing in the historical theology of evangelicalism that leads directly to the adoption of the American civil-religious narrative rather than the more progressive version. Many evangelicals

were once progressive in their social and political positions, and many still are. There must be something else going on with white American evangelicals. I will turn next to some suggestions about what that might be.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL CONTEXT.

I will briefly summarize the main arguments of Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *Cultural Backlash: Trump, Brexit, and Authoritarian Populism* (2019). I was intrigued by this book because when I checked the index to see what the authors have to say about “evangelicalism” and Trump, I was shocked to find only one passing reference listed, and that was under “Trump, Donald J., Evangelical Christian.” How, I wondered, can two respected scholars write a 540 page book (including a bibliography of more than 40 pages) published by the prestigious Cambridge University Press, without paying more attention to the religious group that provides Trump with one of his largest (about one third of his voters) and most reliable bases of support?

The authors’ suggestion is that social location and shared generational experiences account for much of the support for authoritarian leaders, including Donald Trump. We have already seen that there is a long history of evangelical support for progressive causes; that African American and Hispanic evangelicals do not share with white evangelicals their widespread support for Trump; that many evangelical leaders in Latin America and Asia are progressive in their social policies; and that the 20% of white American evangelicals who do not support Trump include many leaders who are progressive in their social and political thinking. Since there is this diversity within evangelicalism, perhaps *whiteness* and other social characteristics better account for white evangelical support for Trump than specific evangelical theological convictions. Norris and Inglehart help us understand some of the shared social characteristics of people who support authoritarian leaders.

First, the authors, like many other scholars, make the case that Trump’s rise to power is part of a larger pattern that is happening in many countries throughout the “developed” world. The U.S. is not alone in recently selecting a nationalistic and authoritarian leader. The sub-title of the Norris-Inglehart book links Trump with “Brexit” because of many parallels between support for Trump and British leader, Boris Johnson, and British withdrawal from the European Union. But that is not all. In recent years similar radical-right leaders have risen to power or gained influence in many countries across Western and Eastern Europe and elsewhere, including Italy, Poland, The Czech Republic, Austria, Hungary, Turkey, Venezuela and the Philippines. Radical-right political parties have increased in popularity and support in other countries including France, Germany, The Netherlands, and Switzerland. Even in

countries where “radical right” leaders have not risen to the top positions of governmental power, pressures from increasingly popular conservative groups have moved centrist governments to the “right,” especially on issues related to immigration and cultural diversity. Norris and Inglehart conclude the main body of their book with the following: “The problem is not just Trump, nor is the problem just America. It reflects pervasive economic and cultural changes, for which there are no easy answers.” (p. 465)

These movements to the political “right” in many nations around the world share enough characteristics in common that they have been given a label: “authoritarian populism.” “Populist” movements begin with the belief that “we, the people” is a “reality.” There is such a “thing” as “us real Americans.” We “ordinary people,” the “silent majority,” share a “common sense,” and “we” have common interests. A common strategy for a would-be strongman leader is to convince “the people” that the powerful “established” institutions of their society do not understand them, nor do they represent the interests of the “real people.” The institutions that have traditionally served to mediate between “the people” and the centers of governmental power are corrupt. The agencies of the government are filled with “deep state” bureaucrats who spread lies and subvert the work the leader is trying to do on behalf of “the people.” The media propagate “fake news.” They are “traitors,” the “enemies of the people.” The House and the Senate initiate and the courts enable “sham, witch hunt” investigations that are designed to bring down the leader. The universities are nothing more than centers of “liberalism” and a repressive “political correctness” that stifles “free speech.” Scientists, public health, and other “experts” distort and exaggerate their data for their own political purposes. The COVID-19 epidemic is a “hoax.” The reported numbers of cases, hospitalizations, and deaths are just made up. The political parties and the “swamp in Washington” cannot be trusted to look out for “us.” The “radicals” who demonstrate in the streets for justice are nothing more than “looters, terrorists and anarchists.” Elections are “rigged” and a “fraud” unless the leader wins. What “the people” need is a strong leader who will ignore and bypass all of these corrupt institutions and will act directly and decisively on behalf of the ordinary people, even if this means defying the traditional norms and *mores* that define what is acceptable behavior, bypassing the constitution, laws, and the decisions of the courts, ignoring reports from the media, and rejecting the data of scientists. This popular desire for a strongman leader who will directly represent “the forgotten people” opens the door for all manner of demagogue to step in and claim to be the strong leader that will take care of the interests of the “common folk.”

Such an “authoritarian” leader promises *security* from outside threats--from Mexico, the Muslim world, the Chinese, and, even, “shithole countries” in Africa and around the world. He (most such leaders are male) will counter the threats of terrorists and halt the flow of immigrant “rapists, murderers and drug dealers.” He will restore *conformity* to traditional values—family, patriotism, religion, personal responsibility, and individual initiative—“our way of life.” And authoritarian leaders insist on unwavering personal *loyalty*, obedience and support for the leader (and his family). Any criticism represents disloyalty and leads to retribution. Once in power, the authoritarian leader utilizes the agencies of the government for his own purposes—and to assure that he remains in power. Remaining in power becomes the number one priority, by whatever means, including using the offices of the Attorney General, the Center for Disease Control, the National Institute of Health, creating obstacles to voting and, even, slowing down deliveries by the U.S Postal Service. Most destructive of all, a strongman leader sows and nurtures seeds of doubt in the legitimacy of the election itself. If the leader does not win, the election was “corrupt,” a “fraud,” “rigged,” and “stolen.”

To explain this widespread turn toward authoritarian populist leaders, the authors first review some of the major social, economic and cultural changes that have happened in many societies in recent decades, especially since 1945 when World War II ended. Their generalizations apply mainly to the “developed” world, and, of course there were many variations in specifics within those parts of the world by nation, class, race, ethnicity, gender, rural-urban residence, and age. Among many other changes, these were generally years of growing affluence and an expanding middle class, increases in migrations and ethnic and cultural diversity, changing sex roles, urbanization, and greater access to higher education. Second, they suggest that these and other big social changes contributed to a “silent revolution” in values. The authors summarize data that indicate that young people who grow up in a relatively affluent, diverse, and changing social environment tend to take on “liberal” and “democratic” values. Unlike their parents and grandparents of the “Interwar Generation” (born in the years 1900-1945) who struggled through the “Great Depression” and one (or two) World Wars, many in the post-war “Baby Boomer” generation (born in the years 1945-1965) had no direct personal experience with the kinds of material challenges their forbears had to deal with. Instead of the “material values” such as work, security, tradition and order that the earlier generation had deemed to be of primary importance, the post-war generations give priority to personal freedoms, self-realization and self-fulfillment. They are open to change; they value diversity; and justice and equality are high on their agenda. They champion care for the environment and respect for the rights of “minority” communities such as racial groups and LGBTQ people.

Institutional religion is less important in their lives than it had been in previous generations. They care about political issues but they do not bother to vote in numbers anything like their forebears. The next age cohort, the GenXers (born 1965-1979), grew up during the countercultural ferment that began around 1960 and the “Millennials” (born 1980-1996) were shaped by globalization and the “neoliberal” policies of the Reagan and Thatcher years. These latter two generations tend to carry on many of the characteristics that had been initiated by the “Boomers.”

Surrounded by younger folks and other “liberals” with values very different from their own, many in the “Interwar Generation” experienced growing resentment. They felt like “strangers in their own land.” A final “tipping point” was reached somewhere around the middle years of the first decade of this new century when the older generation in many parts of the developed world attempted to restore the social order with which they had grown up and was being called into question. In their “cultural backlash” against the changing social conditions around them, they directed their ire “up” against the “elites” who did not share their values: academics and intellectuals (“We are sick and tired of listening to the ‘experts.’”), the “fake news” media, governmental bureaucrats (“the deep state” and the “swamp in Washington”), “establishment” political parties that no longer seemed to represent their interests, and religious leaders who all-too-often seemed to represent the interests of “others” over those who were the pillars of their own communities.

They also harbored resentment “down” toward “outsider” individuals and groups who seemed to “step out of line.” This image of people stepping out of line is part of a “deep story” that sociologist Arlie Hochschild heard over and over again from the anti-government middle and lower class people in Louisiana with whom she spent five years as a “participant observer.” Their deep story goes something like this, as reported in *Strangers in Their Own Land*: First, capitalism is a wonderful economic system because it provides opportunities for some people to “make it.” We know this because we see people in the media and, perhaps, in nearby neighborhoods, who are living the “good life.” They have achieved the “American dream.” But in order for capitalism to work, everyone must play by the same rules: stay in line, work hard, get along, be patient, don’t get caught cheating, and be smart. We are all on our own as individuals and we can each expect to get what we deserve, whether that be success or failure. The problem is that in recent decades the government has intervened through welfare programs, civil rights legislation, and affirmative action on behalf of various disadvantaged groups in ways that are beneficial to “outsider” groups but at the expense of the “ordinary” people who are the pillars of their communities. Supporting the “rights” of immigrants, women, lesbians, bisexuals, gays and others with “deviant”

sexual inclinations, and black and other racial minority groups has been to the disadvantage of the “real” Americans who stay in line and play by the rules. While the government is helping these “others” move unfairly ahead in the line, “we” fall farther behind. The system is not fair to “us”

Norris and Inglehart and others present evidence that there are dramatic differences between Democrats and Republicans in who voters believe is advantaged and who is being discriminated against in American society these days. When asked, people who voted for Hillary Clinton responded that they believe that blacks, transgender individuals, gays and lesbians, women, Hispanics, Muslims and Asian Americans are the victims of discrimination (in that order). Trump voters responded that it is Christians, whites, and men (in that order) who are now the victims of discrimination. To cite a few additional bits of data from a recent Pew survey report, about one third of Republicans but fewer than ten percent of Democrats believe that evangelical Christians experience “a lot” of discrimination. That is a larger percent of Republicans than those who report that Blacks, Hispanics, and LGBTQ people are subject to “a lot” of discrimination in American society. Democrats are far more likely than Republicans to see “a lot” of discrimination against these groups in American society. For example, only 19% of Republicans but 69% of Democrats report that Blacks experience “a lot” of discrimination. These responses represent two very different “deep stories” about what is going on in American society today, and they lead to support for very different governmental policies.

Resentment against the elites “above” and the unfairly advantaged others “below” has given rise to the “cultural backlash” that is spreading through many of the developed nations around the world. This backlash manifests itself in rejection of the liberal and democratic forms of government toward which many nations had been moving over the decades since the end of World War II. The backlash calls for more restrictive policies on immigration (“build the wall”) and rejection of international treaties and alliances in favor of placing national interests first (“Brexit” and “America first”). When democratic elections, separation of powers (executive, legislative, judicial), and governance through compromise between political parties fail to protect the interests of the common people who felt like they had once been the foundation of the nation, then it is time for a strongman who promises to “Make America Great Again.”

In 2020 the Democrats appealed to voters to deny Trump a second term in order to “save our democracy,” as if it is self-evident that democracy is the preferred form of government in the U.S. But that can no longer be taken for granted. Norris and Inglehart present data that show that between 2006 and 2017, Republican support for democracy as a “good” or “very good” form of government declined

from 88% to 80%. That is still a very strong percentage, but many Republicans lack enthusiasm in their support for democracy. In 2017 fewer than one half (44%) of Republicans affirmed democracy as a “very good” form of government while 64% of Democrats affirmed democracy as a “very good” form of government. When asked about other forms of government, nearly one third (31%) of Republicans affirmed “strongman rule without elections” as a “good” or “very good” form of government. In 2017, one in five Republicans affirmed “Army rule” as a “good” or “very good” form of government. Democrats supported these alternative forms of government at lower rates. So, as is the case in many nations around the world, support for democracy in America is declining, and support for various forms of authoritarian government is increasing in Republican, but not in Democratic, circles. Part of the strategy of the Trump campaign for reelection in 2020 was to strengthen feelings of doubt about the institutions of society and to convince his “base” that “Only I can fix it.” Trump more recently stated that “I am the only thing standing between the American dream and total anarchy.” It is not the Constitution and the unique American form of democratic government that enables the realization of the American dream. No American social or political institutions, including democracy, can be trusted. Only Donald Trump.

Of course not everyone has been caught up in this conservative “cultural backlash.” In fact, as tends to be true in other national movements to the political right, there is widespread agreement that the American people who provide the “base” of support for such movements tend to share a specific social location and specific social characteristics: They tend to be white, male, rural, religiously active, without college education, and, most importantly, they are aging members of the interwar generation. As I mentioned above, John Fea is one of many scholars who agree that these characteristics are shared by many (but, of course not all) supporters of nationalistic and authoritarian leaders, including white evangelicals who support Donald Trump.

Norris and Inglehart explore other possible social factors that might give rise to a conservative backlash. Economic conditions is a prime candidate. It would make sense if people who were suffering from widespread unemployment (or underemployment), a recession, poverty, bankruptcies, etc. would agitate for a change in the status quo. In the authors’ analysis, economic factors do play a role in how people respond to changing social conditions, but their conclusion is that it is generation, or the cohort of people who shared common experiences during their growing-up years, that is more closely associated with the cultural backlash than any other single variable. It is the rural, white, men without a college education and *who are part of the interwar generation* that are most likely to support

nationalistic and authoritarian political leadership, including the election of Donald Trump to the U.S. presidency. American evangelicals who voted for Trump fit that profile. Again, none of this has any direct connection to the unique theological convictions of white American evangelicals or fundamentalists.

SOME POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF POPULAR EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY: AUTHORITARIANISM, INDIVIDUALISM AND ESCHATOLOGY

There are numerous definitions of the theology of evangelicalism, no one of which is normative or shared by all of the members of the diverse evangelical “family.” I have already made the case that the social and political policies of evangelicals have changed through history and that they vary from group to group, so I am sure that there is no direct line that links evangelical theology with support for Donald Trump. But I do want to suggest that there are several underlying affinities between the popular American version of evangelicalism and Trump-ism. Differing American stories and social location explain a lot, but not everything. I will offer just a few brief suggestions on the social and political implications of a few of the convictions that are shared by many fundamentalists and conservative evangelicals: authoritarianism, individualism, and one version of Christian eschatology.

1. Authoritarianism. Several commentators have noted that there is a “cult-like” quality about the undeviating loyalty of his supporters to Donald Trump. They will accept what he says rather than the evidence of scientists, historians, journalists, other “fact-checkers,” or, even photographic and video records (e.g. the size of the crowd for his inauguration and Trump denials of statements that are recorded on video). Remember that the title of John Fea’s book is *Believe Me*. “Fact checkers” counted more than 30,000 lies and misrepresentations that President Trump told during his presidency, culminating in the “Big Lie” that he had won the 2020 election, contrary to all of the evidence. How can we account for the fact that so many of his supporters, including white evangelicals, continue to believe him, in spite of so much observable evidence to the contrary? For Trump himself and for many of his supporters, the first response is to “shoot the messenger”—to believe that it is the illegal “leakers,” the “liberal fake news media,” the Democrats, the scientists, the scholars and the medical community who are doing the lying, not Trump. It is all part of a liberal plot to frighten the American people and ruin the economy as a strategy for winning the 2020 elections. It is simply not true that before the end of September 2020 more than seven million Americans had contracted COVID-19; that more than 200,000 Americans had died from the virus; and that nearly 25% of all cases and deaths from the virus

world-wide are Americans. The president is right when he declares that these reports from his own scientific and medical agencies are all a “hoax.” All of the “experts” are simply wrong.

Some observers have suggested that behind this acceptance of the “alternative facts” promulgated by a populist authoritarian political leader over historical and scientific evidence to the contrary is the willingness of American fundamentalists and conservative evangelicals to accept as “authoritative” and without question the teachings of a literal interpretation of the Bible, including the creation accounts, as proclaimed by a strong pastor or popular teacher, rather than the data that are provided by scholars and other experts.

A saying that was incorporated into the lyrics of some Christian musical groups during the 1970s was: “The Bible says it; I believe it; that settles it.” The scientific, historical and literary data do not matter. In the words of evangelical pastor and author, Michael Frost, “There is a straight line from young earth creationism, through climate change denial, to believing the pandemic is a hoax and masks and social distancing are oppression.” Acceptance of the authoritarian leadership of religious and political “strongmen” is an important part of both fundamentalist religion and the widespread “cultural backlash” against the “silent revolution.” Neither democracy nor the “decency” and “dignity” that the Democrats hoped to restore to the presidential office are necessarily desired characteristics of strongman leadership. Remember that Pastor Jeffress, speaking on behalf of “many evangelicals,” wants “the meanest, toughest son of a gun I can find” in the Oval Office. As long as the leader is furthering the white evangelical agenda, character does not matter and neither do democracy, decency or dignity.

Many social scientists have also noted since the 1960s that anti-intellectualism and a-historicism are deeply imbedded within American popular culture. Ignoring the data of science and the ruminations of “pointy-headed intellectuals,” and preferring nostalgia over the critical work of historians are as American as apple pie. Too many white American evangelicals have adopted these anti-intellectual and a-historical components of the popular culture around them. The result is a too-easy acceptance of the “alternative facts” proclaimed by authoritarian leaders, including Trump, no matter how fanciful and insulting his words might be. In the words of Christopher McKenzie: “What did you think was going to happen when we told three generations of evangelicals that scientists are lying to them?” Too many evangelicals are willing to uncritically accept Donald Trump’s invitation to “Believe me” because they have long been accustomed to accepting as “authoritative” the literal interpretations of the biblical texts that are provided by popular preachers and teachers rather than the evidence and the

Careful and nuanced analyses of scholars and historians. Acceptance of authority, anti-intellectualism, and disregard for history are all part of a single package.

2. Individualism. I want to suggest, second, that an emphasis on individual salvation, freedom for the individual, individual responsibility for one's own place in society, and support for limited government are also all part of one package. Assumptions about both the spiritual and social centrality of the individual make it difficult to recognize that there are structural and systemic realities (e.g. "systemic" racism and sexism) that need to be acknowledged and dealt with, as advocated by the Civil Rights movement and, more recently, "Black Lives Matter," "Me, too" and other movements in support of justice for racial and other "outsider" groups. Emphasizing the spiritual and social centrality of the individual makes it almost impossible to "get" the reality of systemic racism, sexism and other social-structural issues that contribute to continued (and growing) inequality in American society. Excessive focus on the freedom and the rights of the individual also makes it difficult to think or talk about, much less develop and fund programs that contribute to "the common good." Just as each of us stands alone before God and is responsible for our own salvation, each of us should also be responsible for finding our own place in the social order. The less governmental interference with individual freedoms and individual responsibilities the better. Government interventions make things worse, not better. In words attributed to President Reagan: "The most terrifying words in the English language are: 'I am from the government and I am here to help you.'" Refusing to wear masks to reduce the spread of COVID-19 because it is an infringement on "my personal freedom" and "my constitutional (and, even, 'God given') rights" is one extreme manifestation of a widely held American understanding of "individualism." This individualistic open defiance of the mandates of Trump's own scientific and medical agencies was on dramatic display when, during his acceptance of the Republican nomination of his candidacy, 1500 guests sat shoulder-to-shoulder on the White House lawn with few masks in sight. Cooperation to realize a common good, even if it is to reduce the spread of a pandemic, is not highly valued in individualistic America. One result is dramatically more cases, hospitalizations and deaths from COVID-19 than in any other developed nation in the world.

3. Eschatology. I also think that the political implications of one particular interpretation of eschatology (study of the "end times") that is held by many evangelicals also play a role in the political orientations of many fundamentalists and evangelicals. I will mention just two notions that are part of an eschatological scheme that is very popular in evangelical circles in America and around the world. As I mentioned above, through much of the history of the church, the most common understanding of the

“end of the age” was “post-millennialism.” This was the idea that the return of Jesus would come AFTER a “millennium,” a “1000 year” period of peace and prosperity. So the responsibility of Christians and the church was to work to improve conditions in society in preparation for the second coming of Christ. Beginning in the late decades of the 19th century, a new “pre-millennial” eschatology became widely popular. According to this (dispensational) interpretation, social conditions are so hopelessly bad in this sinful, fallen world that nothing can be done about it. There can be no real thousand-year “millennium” of peace and prosperity until after the “rapture” and the return of Jesus — which might happen at any moment now. So the return of Jesus must happen BEFORE (“pre-”) the millennium. The best we can do for now is to make sure that each of us is saved as an individual and that we are doing all that we can to make sure that other individuals are also saved and ready for the “rapture” up into the sky to meet Jesus when he comes again, or death, whichever comes first. Either way, for the saved, heaven lies beyond. This pre-millennial eschatological perspective has been popularized in the “Left Behind” series of books, movies, and games authored by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins. Thirty million copies have been sold (“the best-selling adult fiction of all time”) and some have reached number one on the *New York Times* best-seller list. One of the political implications of this way of thinking about society is that it is futile and a waste of resources to try to make social conditions better. We are each on our own and we should each get what we deserve. The purpose of government is to punish evil-doers, to protect our freedom to worship God as we please, and to make sure that no one has unfair advantage in the competition for the “good life.” Alleviation of human suffering is the responsibility of charitable individuals and private organizations, not the government. And even if climate change is not a “hoax,” there is no point in wasting scarce resources to improve climate conditions because Jesus is coming soon. We can be confident that Jesus’ return is imminent partly because of recent developments in Israel. Which brings me to a final point:

A second way in which dispensational, pre-millennial eschatology has political implications is in its interpretation of the place of Israel in God’s great scheme of things. In this way of thinking, God’s promises to make Israel great should be read literally and these promises still stand. They will all be fulfilled in due time. Meanwhile, God’s promise that he will bless the nations that support the state of Israel and curse those that do not should also be read literally—and these promises, too, still stand. That is why many fundamentalists and conservative evangelicals are among the most ardent American supporters of Zionism. Many evangelicals saw fulfillment of biblical prophecy in the establishment of the State of Israel in Palestinian territory in 1948 and they continue to see fulfillment of prophecy in

each twist and turn in conditions in Israel, down to and including the relocation of the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem in October, 2018. This is an important “sign” that the return of Jesus (the “rapture”) is about to happen because the premillennial eschatological understanding of what the Bible says is that the return of Jesus will be to *Jerusalem* as capital of Israel. Conditions are now more ready than ever before for the “rapture” to happen. Concern for justice for the Palestinians, whose ancestral territory is now increasingly being occupied by the Israelis, in violation of existing treaties and international law but with the support of the Trump administration, is not much on the white evangelical agenda. Donald Trump has his own political reasons for supporting the state of Israel, one of which is to solidify the support of his evangelical (and Jewish Zionist) base. “We moved the capital of Israel to Jerusalem. That’s for the evangelicals.” he said. And white American evangelicals are grateful. Few things that Trump has done as president have been as much appreciated by white evangelicals as his relocation of the Israeli capital to Jerusalem.

So while it is undoubtedly the case that social location and a cultural backlash that includes fear, a quest for power, and nostalgia for an imaginary past explain much about evangelical support for Donald Trump, my guess is that there are also some resonances between his person and his policies and the popular religious inclinations of American evangelicals—especially those who are white, male, rural, without a college education and of the interwar generation.

SOME CONCLUDING COMMENTS ON THE TRUMP PHENOMENON

Finally, what about the future? What might happen next? One of the reasons that Donald Trump won the presidency in 2016 is that members of the interwar generation, including many evangelicals, voted at much higher rates than the next generations. But the members of the interwar generation are also dying at a much faster rate. This bodes ill for the supporters of the nationalistic and authoritarian “cultural backlash” that Donald Trump and the “inter-war generation” represent against the more open and inclusive values of the “silent revolution” of the younger generations. Norris and Inglehart expect that because of the demographic realities, the values of the younger generations are likely to prevail. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. repeated the much grander expectation that “The great arc of the moral universe is long but it bends toward justice.” If these hopeful expectations are correct, we can be optimistic about the long-term prospects for greater justice and equality in American society--and elsewhere around the world. In many places around the world, the younger generations have been out in the streets in large numbers demonstrating in support of greater justice and equality (e.g. “Black

Lives Matter,” “Me, too.”), so we can have some confidence that in the not-too-distant future things will change in that direction as one generation departs and is replaced by another.

But it is not so easy to be optimistic about the future of white evangelicalism in America. Not only are the demographics changing as the proportion of whites in the American population continues to decline, but too many white evangelicals have attached themselves too closely to the “backlash” values that too many share with Donald Trump: white supremacy, white nationalism, misogyny, homophobia, xenophobia, Islamophobia, authoritarianism, and nostalgia for an imagined past that is disconnected from actual history. Meanwhile, in America and elsewhere, increasing numbers of young people, including evangelicals, are leaving both the Republican Party and their churches and joining the growing ranks of the “nones” and the “dones.” They are walking away partly in reaction to this close association between their elders in the church and the “cultural backlash” that supports Donald Trump. Of course I can claim no ability to predict the future, so I will conclude with other words that Donald Trump likes to use: “We will see what happens.”

PART SIX. A “HAVEN IN A HEARTLESS WORLD”?

OUR IMMEDIATE FAMILY

As other social institutions change, family patterns change, too. To mention just a few of the big changes: Families and households have gotten smaller. Extended family relationships are not as important as they once were. Families do not really function as political units in our democratic system (with some notable exceptions such as the Kennedy and Bush dynasties), and, with creeping secularization, the religious functions of families are not as strong as they once were. Few urban nuclear families still function as productive economic units. But in some ways, our nuclear families, small and fragile as they are, loom larger than ever in our minds as the most important social institution of all because many of us look to the nuclear family as our primary source of social and emotional identity and support. In the words of Christopher Lasch, we expect the family to be “a haven in a heartless world.” And as an old saying goes, “A man’s home is his castle,” the implication being that outside the home people are under threat of some kind of siege or attack. Nuclear families have proven to be rather vulnerable “castles,” however, so there are many calls to “focus on the family.” And when we do that, what do we see?

Many sociologists once optimistically thought of nuclear families as providing two important specialized functions in a segmented and compartmentalized modern social system: emotional support for family members, and reproduction and care for infants and young children, because neither of these functions was performed by any other social institutions. But rates of divorce and remarriage are high. Many couples choose not to bother with marriage (or parenthood) at all, and singleness is an option chosen by increasing numbers of young people. Working mothers, even of infants, is a growing phenomenon. Since there are so many reports of failure, neglect and abuse in relationships between spouses and between parents and children, it is easy to understand why many people are leery of marriage or any kind of long-term commitments. The costs that come with the vulnerability and commitment that life in a family involve seem to be too high and the rewards too small and too problematic, so increasing numbers of Americans look elsewhere for identity, meaning, and emotional support.

The second function of nuclear families in reproduction and early child care is not going all that well, either. Birth rates are at an all-time low, with increasing numbers of persons choosing to remain childless, and the numbers of births to mothers who are not married are high. Schools use government money to fill in some of the gaps that are created when families fail to fulfill their traditional functions, so schools provide an ever-expanding array of services above and beyond just education: meals, after-school and summer activities, both physical and mental health care. But as schools and other institutions provide services that were once the province of families (extended families, usually), nuclear families become even weaker because they have fewer “functions” to perform together. It seems like a vicious cycle: Family ties weaken because the family provides fewer functions in society, and when other institutions provide the services and support that families once did, families become even weaker.

Poverty exacerbates many of these issues that are often treated as “family problems,” but I am not focusing in these recollections and reflections on matters of class differences, racism, or sexism, so I will leave it at that, even though economic and social inequities might be the most fundamental issues that trouble our society these days. I will repeat just one statistic that reflects relationships between social class and family patterns: Among adult women who have not completed high school, 87% have given birth to at least one child outside of marriage. Among mothers who have completed four years of college, only about one third have given birth outside of marriage. This is not to say that a single (or LGBTQ) person cannot be a good parent, but it is to emphasize the point that the composition and functions of the family have changed a lot, even just during my lifetime.

Expectations of what a nuclear, “domestic” family should be and do probably reached their peak in the U.S. during the 1950s, the decade during which we were married, so our family story was shaped, in some ways at least, by a lot of pressure to provide the kind of emotional support and nurturance that were available nowhere else in a competitive, materialistic and individualistic society. Expectations were also high that the nuclear family would produce and provide foundational care for children, at least until schools could take over part of that responsibility. I will review some of the ways in which we did and did not live up to these high expectations, sometimes by design and sometimes by default.

Ruth and I were married during the evening of June 20, 1957 in the First Mennonite Church in Reedley, California. **(Photo #10)** Ruth had turned 21 just one month earlier and I was seven weeks past my twenty second birthday. Little did we know that in many ways what we were doing fit almost exactly into family patterns that were typical in America during the era of the 1950s, a period of family and

religious conservatism. The age at which we were married, as I have said, was right on the national average for that year—the lowest average age for marriage in the history of the U.S. Our wedding was in June, a month so full of weddings that we had to schedule ours on a Thursday evening since the more usual Friday and Saturday evenings were already taken in all of the local church venues that might have been options for us—and I am quite sure that we never once thought of having our wedding in any place other than one of our home churches. Having our wedding on a beach, or near a lake or river, or in some other exotic location was not even on our radar. We just assumed that church and family fit together like hand and glove. We should have known that we were conforming to some powerful larger social patterns from the fact that, as I have mentioned, more than one third of our Immanuel graduating class of 1953 married fellow class members. And most of those couples married sooner after high school graduation than we did, while they were still teenagers, or in their very early twenties. To suggest an analogy: it was like there was a bicycle-built-for-two just waiting for us. All we had to do was graduate from high school, climb on together, start peddling, and away we went. We might have imagined that we were each creating new families that were uniquely our own, but our marital bicycles actually looked and rode pretty much alike. I will briefly describe our own particular version of that bicycle-built-for-two—and the little trailer that we added behind for our children.

COURTSHIP

The usual pattern of mate selection that most of us followed went something like this: One started a family by getting married in a public, religious wedding ceremony. Marriage was typically preceded by a whole series of steps in the courtship or mate selection process, each step along the way being fairly clearly marked by sets of socially recognized symbols. The process, for me, started during my freshman year at Immanuel (when I was just over five and one half feet tall and weighed just over 100 pounds) with group dating. This meant that several of us groups of good friends went places and did things together (school and church activities, mostly), which soon led to pairing off into couples. So before I knew it, Mary Lou and I were “going together” as a “couple.” Since most of the members of our peer group were “going steady,” at some point Mary Lou and I did, too, meaning that we exchanged class rings as a sign that we were a couple dating exclusively one another. Mary Lou wrapped tape around my class ring and wore it on whichever finger worked best and I wore her small ring on my little finger. Sometimes she wore my blue Immanuel sweater with a big “I” attached, indicating that I had been a member of one (or several) of the school athletic teams. Engagement was the next expected

step in the process, then the wedding, followed by a honeymoon, and then pregnancy and parenthood. Each step implied greater sexual intimacy, but, of course, the *expected* sequence was first dating, then engagement, then the wedding, only then sexual intercourse, and, following that, almost automatically, parenthood.

Mary Lou's MB foster parents in Reedley (She and her older sister had been left as orphans after the deaths of their parents in her home community in Bessie, Oklahoma.) made every effort to ensure that this proper sequence was followed by setting a curfew of ten p.m., no matter what the occasion, and they also always had a bright light on in the driveway and yard behind their house out in the country. The whole dating process had elements of being something like an escalator, which meant that it took more effort to get off than to be carried (by external and internalized social expectations) on up to the next level. This became really clear when, during our freshman year at Reedley College, I "broke up" with Mary Lou after nearly four years of "going together." I did not want to just be carried along by the social escalator, which would have meant imminent marriage, like most of our friends were doing. Many of our friends were upset for a very long time at this violation of expectations, which they viewed as an injustice against Mary Lou. All of this is a very far cry from the current absence of any prescribed sequence at all. Pre-marital sexual intercourse, often beginning at very young ages, single parenthood, and openly living together without marriage, with sometimes an engagement somewhere along the way before or after parenthood, are now such common occurrences that they no longer carry with them the aura of secrecy, social disapproval or personal embarrassment that they once did. Accompanying all of this were changes in terminology. The meanings of terms like "dating," "going steady," and "engagement" were once quite clear, but what exactly does being "in a relationship" mean these days?

Foundational to this whole system of mate selection was the assumption that marriages should be based on "love," another word (like family) that collapses a great variety of meanings into one term. C. S. Lewis wrote about *The Four Loves* that are marked by different terms in the Greek language: *agape*, the kind of selfless love that gives highest priority to the best interests of another person; *storge*, the kind of affection that members of a family have for one another; *eros*, romantic, or sexual attractions; and *philia*, the kind of relationship that is shared by close friends. None of these terms includes other uses of "love" that the word has been stretched to include these days, such as "I love my Prius," or "I love the chili at Wendy's," or even "I love my laxative." Of course we did not think about these kinds of complexities. Most of us were quite sure that we just knew what it meant to be "in love," and we

took it for granted that love was a necessary pre-condition for marriage. Sometimes it seemed to be the only one.

The assumption that marriage should be based on romantic love has been widely taken for granted in American culture, but not for much longer than the last century or so. I first learned to have questions about this whole idea that love and marriage go together (There was even a song about that: “like a horse and carriage.”) in a sociology course on marriage and the family at UCSB where I learned that what we knew as “romantic love” had its origins in medieval Europe and that this kind of love initially had nothing to do with marriage. This is not the place to go into the whole issue of what romance or romantic love really mean, but even a quick search of the topic on-line will reveal some of the complexity of the matter. There are long lists of the dimensions or components of romantic love but I will mention only two because these are readily apparent in the “love letters” that Ruth and I wrote to one another. One of the characteristics of being in love is an unrealistic idealization or even idolization of the beloved, who is placed high on a pedestal and almost worshipped as being without blemish or fault. Another component of being in this kind of love is a feeling of emptiness or incompleteness that can only be filled or satisfied by the beloved.

One question that sociologists ask is whether intense experiences of “falling in love” are found in every culture or if there are cultures where this phenomenon is unknown. There might not be reports of people falling in love in every single culture, but at least it comes pretty close to being a cultural universal. Powerful emotions of attraction between a man and a woman (Same-sex attractions were not much on the public agenda in the 1950s.) do seem to happen in almost every culture, but an interesting question is how various societies respond to couples who find themselves intensely and passionately attracted to one another. I remember one report that said that passionate love should be treated something like epileptic seizures: they happen sometimes, so they have to be dealt with, but they should certainly not be used as the basis for something as consequential as entering a marriage and establishing a family!

In spite of being exposed to ideas like these during my undergraduate years at UCSB, it took some time for me to recognize that the traditional Japanese system of arranged marriages (*miai kekkon*) might actually have some merit, and that practical considerations might also have an important role to play in decisions about marriage. For example, the Old Testament has many stories about marriages happening without falling in love as a prerequisite. One example is the Old Testament practice of Levirate marriages in which a brother is legally obligated to marry the widow of his deceased brother. I have already mentioned that Ruth’s grandfather married the “wrong” woman when her father sent the

older sister to Russia from Germany rather than the younger sister with whom Wilhelm Neufeld had fallen in love. He married the older sister anyhow. Our friend, Marge Gerbrandt Wiens, tells the story of her widowed missionary grandfather who married a woman who travelled to China to marry him after hearing missionary Wiens speak only once in a church service. She did it “for the mission,” she said. My own grandfather Enns’ marriage to my father’s step-mother had elements of being a very practical arrangement. And it does not take much study or thought to realize that the *agape* love that is so important in New Testament Christianity has a lot more to do with intentionally acting in the best interests of other persons than it does with intense feelings of attraction or affection for an individual of the opposite (or same) gender.

To cite but one more example of a marriage entered mostly for practical reasons is that of Henry P. Isaak, the father of my good friend from Immanuel days, Abe Isaak. In his account of his life back in Russia before their dramatic escape across the Amur River into China, H. P. Isaak described his proposal to his second wife after the death of his first wife left him with two small sons. His second wife was the younger sister of his deceased first wife, so she sometimes helped with child care. Henry realized that he needed a second wife, not so much for himself, he wrote, but “for my sons, my household, and my farm.” So one day when he was visiting his father-in-law, he decided that if his young sister-in-law followed him out to the barn to say good-bye when he left to return to his home, that would be an omen that he should propose marriage. He recalls the words of his marriage proposal out in the barn: “What would be your answer if the Lord would give you the duty to care for your deceased sister’s children and accept me as your husband?” When her answer was “Yes,” because the Lord had already told her that she should do this, “We both knelt down, right there, and thanked the Lord for hearing our prayers.” (p. 69) Not much of what we know as “romance” about that.

Loewen and Nolt cite a list of “pitfalls” that some Mennonite leaders warned young people about when American Mennonites first began to move into cities. The list includes: amusements, the saloon, fashion, bad friends—and “falling in love.” Compared with recent elaborately planned, dramatic and romantic engagement scenarios, this part of our past really was “a foreign country.” But this pragmatic approach to marriage was the normal pattern through much of human history, and that foreign country is not really all that far away. For many of us it is just a generation or two in the past.

But in spite of these examples from the past, and contrary to the counsel of at least some Mennonite leaders, by the middle of the twentieth century when Ruth and I were going through the process, it was pretty much taken for granted that falling in love was absolutely necessary and almost sufficient as a

reason for marriage. In this environment, there was little room for marrying for pragmatic reasons like finances, or for help on the farm, or to form a political alliance, or to produce children for the extended family, or for help with housekeeping and childcare. Writing pre-nuptial agreements and marital contracts about practical things like finances seemed really out of place. Falling in love was certainly an important part of the process that led to our marriage.

As I indicated earlier, Ruth and I first met when we became neighbors. I was eight years old when my family moved to our farm across Dinuba Avenue from the Neufeld home and farm, but we did not become good friends until she transferred to Immanuel from Reedley High School for the second half of our freshman year. She stayed at Immanuel for her sophomore and junior years before returning to Reedley High School for her senior year. There were many occasions for us to develop a friendship with one another while we were classmates at Immanuel, including travel around the state in school musical groups. We became even better friends during our first semester at Reedley College. We took classes together, sang in musical groups, did IVCF activities, had overlapping circles of friends, and, eventually, worked together in the Selma Chapel. Since she lived just across the street and I owned a car and she did not, I often drove Ruth to and from Reedley College and other activities. (My first car was a blue 1936 Pontiac coupe.) All of this was nothing more than just an innocent and convenient friendship because Ruth was almost always involved in a romance of one level of intensity or another, usually with guys from her church. As far as I can tell, my friendship with Ruth had nothing at all to do with my decision to “break up” with Mary Lou since that occurred before Ruth and I even thought about becoming more than just neighbors and friends. Our friendship extended long before that and, besides, Ruth was almost always already “taken” by some other guy, so she was “off limits” to any kind of romantic overtures. So over a period of about four years we were just really good friends.

All of this changed dramatically when Ruth informed me one early evening in December, 1953 after I drove her home from Reedley College that she had broken up with her latest guy and she was interested in being more than “just friends” with me. Whoa! Big shock! Our first “date” was Christmas caroling with a group of friends. Ruth had to cancel a date with another one of her boyfriends in order to make this possible. With this began a dating relationship that led to our engagement about 18 months later, during the spring of 1955. Before we announced our engagement, however, we had conversations with our parents, a residual of an old tradition of the man asking for the “hand” of the woman in marriage. We received their approval, along with my dad’s somber, and completely unnecessary reminder that “Marriage is for keeps, you know.” We announced our engagement in a card that was at the end of a

“treasure hunt” out in the orchards and vineyards around Ruth’s and my rural homes that was ostensibly part of our May birthday celebration with friends. **(Photo #6)** I did not buy Ruth a typical diamond engagement ring, but we did exchange gold wedding bands. Ruth wore her wedding band on the ring finger of her right hand as a sign that she was engaged, though I do not know how many people got the message since this was not common practice in the U.S. as it was in parts of Europe. Because we calculated that we had saved about \$200 by not buying engagement and wedding rings, we called this the “Lord’s money” and we decided to donate it to some good cause. Some of the money went to individuals who were more needy than we were but we finally donated most of the money to IVCF.

I think the sexual dimension of our relationship is our own private business, but I will report that our behavior in public was so circumspect that some of our fellow students at Reedley College who did not know us very well were surprised when we announced our engagement because they had assumed that we were sister and brother. I will also say that one reason I volunteered for the draft during the summer after our graduation from Reedley College was that for various reasons we did not want to marry as soon after our engagement as many of our friends were doing, and it did not seem prudent to stay in the same area for too long a period of time. So we did manage to keep things in the expected, “proper” sequence.

As I mentioned previously, I was drafted into the U.S. Army on July 25, 1955. Ruth spent the rest of that summer in Reedley before moving into a dormitory (formerly a marine barracks since the new UCSB campus in Isla Vista was located on a former marine base) on the campus of the University of California, Santa Barbara for the fall semester. I was discharged from the army on May 2, 1957 in Fort Ord, near Monterey, California. I have also mentioned that during my 21 months of military service, Ruth and I exchanged letters almost daily. These many long love letters provide a treasure trove of memories, not only about the details of our daily activities but they also reveal the deepest thoughts and feelings of our hearts, minds and souls at ages 19 through 21. I think I should mention some of what we found in those old letters when we finally re-read them during the winter of 2013. Just as we had forgotten how pious we were in those days, we had also pretty much forgotten just how deeply, passionately, and hopelessly in love we were. It was really fun to be reminded, even though at first it was hard to recognize the authors as being us.

First of all, our letters are filled with the terms of endearment that were in common use in those days: dear, darling, sweetheart, beloved and honey (but other terms like “baby,” “sweetie” and “babe” do not show up in our letters). I mostly addressed Ruth as “Ruthie” and “Rufus,” names that were also used

for her in her family. We very often addressed one another as “friend,” since that is how our relationship began—and continued. I do not know why Ruth’s younger sister, Freda, was reading at least some of the letters that Ruth wrote, but Ruth once mentioned that Freda had scolded her for using “darling” too often. She needed to be more creative. I repeatedly told Ruth how beautiful she was, and I constantly asked her to send more photos of herself. I begged, bribed, and threatened in order to get more photos, which was not always cheap or easy to do in those days before digital photo technology. In more than one letter I reported that I had reached the objective conclusion that she was the most beautiful of the many women whose photos adorned the tents in our infantry company in Korea. I could make this unbiased and definitive judgment because I had checked all of the photos while walking through the tents while I was on guard duty. Ruth was the winner.

I think we might have been somewhat unusual in the frequency with which we addressed one another as “wife” and “husband,” even though we were still only engaged. I think the story of our engagement was behind our premature use of these terms, which reflected our unshakable confidence that we were as good as married, even though the completion of our marriage was still in the future, we were separated by an ocean, and we were living in two almost totally different cultures (U.S. Army and UCSB campus). The story of our engagement goes something like this:

As I have tried to explain, we were very pious during our college years, and beyond. This meant, among other things, that we were sure that God had very specific plans for our lives, and that included not only the big matters like personal character, marriage and our professions, but down to the finest details of our everyday lives as well. We were also very sure that God could use passages in the Bible to show us what those plans were, so it was important that we read the Bible regularly with an eye open for what God might be telling us to do (or not do). As I mentioned earlier, instructions from God might come through any passage in the Bible—a sentence, or a phrase (as in “Get thee down south...”), or even just a single word. So one night during the spring of 1955 while I was reading Psalm 37 it suddenly became very clear to me that it was God’s will that Ruth and I would be married. When I read Psalm 37 now, I cannot even recall what exactly it was that led me to that conclusion. We think it was probably the first part of verse 34: “Wait for the Lord, and keep to his way, and he will exalt you to possess the land.” I think I interpreted “possess the land” to mean our marriage and that what I needed to do was relax and be a person of good character. God would take care of the rest. So, the next day, during a Sunday morning drive from Reedley to the Selma Chapel, I announced to Ruth that God had shown me that we were going to be married. No proposal down on one knee, no flowers, no

bottles of wine, no doves or balloons, no music, nothing like that. Just an announcement. After some thought, prayer, and conversation, Ruth joined me in this confidence that our marriage was indeed God's will and was just as good as a done deal. Ruth was 18 and I was 19 at the time of our engagement, which might seem to be very young by today's standards, but please remember that several of the couples who had been our high school classmates and close friends were already married by that time, and what we were doing was close to the average ages in our generation, just as the ages of our children and grandchildren when they were married were pretty close to the averages for theirs.

We could not possibly use a process anything like that to make such a big decision now because in reading the Bible it seems more important to begin with what the writers of the biblical texts might have had in mind in their original contexts and go from there rather than to just assign meanings that are random and arbitrary. But that is what happened then and it seemed to work out really well over the more than 65 years that we have been together. Actually, according to some of the early texts in the Old Testament, the Jewish people sometimes counted on a kind of lottery procedure to make decisions, and some Mennonite groups still select their ministers by lot, so I suppose it is still possible to find God's leading through all kinds of means, whether random, rational or otherwise. Of course it helped a lot that Ruth and I shared very similar backgrounds and that we had been really good friends for several years before our relationship became complicated by romance. I took some delight in pointing out to my students that statistics indicate that marital "success" correlates strongly with indicators of similar social backgrounds, and that, given the right combination of sociological characteristics, it does not really matter all that much which individual one marries. That is probably one of the reasons that arranged marriages generally turn out pretty well. I doubt that what I had to say did much to shape the actual behavior of any of my students, but during the 21 months that we were apart it was easy for Ruth and me to think of our relationship as so strong and final that we had no problem in repeatedly addressing one another in our letters as "husband" and "wife."

In addition to our endlessly repeated affirmations of our love, there are other themes that recur throughout our letters. We were really lonely for one another. We missed the conversations that we had when we were together because there was no one else around with whom we could communicate that was anything like what we shared. So we wrote about almost everything in our long, soul-baring exchanges of letters: our daily activities, the people in our lives and what our mutual friends were up to; how Ruth was getting along with her and my families; what we were reading in the Bible and other

books and magazines; the movies we saw; the clothes that Ruth was sewing or buying; gains and losses in our weight; changes in hair style.

I described for Ruth, sometimes more graphically than I should have, what the guys around me were doing. I did exercise some restraint, though, because sometimes I just said that I would tell her more when we were back together again. She told me about the women she was with and some of her frustrations with the groups she was working with, and the class assignments she had to do at UCSB. We wrote about our plans for the future: what it would be like when we were together again, our wedding and honeymoon (Maybe out in the Mojave Desert, we joked.), what and where I might study and what kind of career I might have, what it might be like to have children, where we might travel and where we might live. Some of our letters sound a bit like *The Song of Solomon* in the Old Testament, though we were never quite as explicit in our use of sexual terminology as the author of that ancient biblical book. We used euphemisms such as when slender Ruth told me that she was gaining some weight and that it was “in the right places.” We wrote about how inexperienced we were in sexual matters and how we didn’t mind that. We would figure it out together, with some help from our doctor and things we might find to read.

Perhaps I should briefly elaborate on what I mean by saying that we were quite innocent in matters related to sexuality. Clear boundaries and considerable distance between the sexes were still very much part of my old world. I mentioned the T shirts that covered the girls’ modest one-piece bathing suits around the swimming pool up at the MB Hartland Christian Camp in the Sierras. Immanuel cheer leaders wore buttoned blouses and pedal pushers. It was pretty scandalous if a girl’s bra strap should happen to show—to say nothing of inadvertently exposed cleavage. If some of us boys happened to find out that one of our female friends was having her menstrual period, that was an embarrassment for all concerned. In fact, I think we all made every effort to act as if we did not even know that such a thing existed. Pregnancies, including ours, were hidden for as long as possible—a far cry from the current widespread sharing of photographs of bare pregnant tummies with their protruding navels, and sometimes much more.

Some information about the female anatomy could be gleaned from sources like the lingerie section in the Sears Catalog and perhaps from line drawings or diagrams in textbooks. *Playboy* magazine, when it could be had, offered some clues, but at that time their scantily clad models still remained strategically covered, leaving much room for mystery and for the imagination to fill in the gaps. There was a joke that an entire generation of males who got their information about the female body from *Playboy*

centerfolds grew up thinking that women had staples in their abdomens. During my lifetime we have gone from that level of reserve to the ubiquitous ads that use the seductively exposed bodies of young women to sell everything from phones to hamburgers, to say nothing of Victoria's Secret and advertisements for Viagra and Cialis. Graphic pornography is now so readily available at the click of a mouse that little room for mystery remains. It is hard to believe that in the early years of television, even married couples could not be shown in bed together. Recollections like these, along with the extreme modesty still observed by Amish and some Moslem women, can serve as reminders of just how far most of us have moved in the direction of free (or required?) public displays of the (mostly young) female body. Of course things like opening the "glass ceiling" and providing legal protections for a woman's right to say "no" are positive developments, but I do wonder if there would not still be some value in maintaining a greater degree of respect for modesty and privacy. In this and other areas, too, I am afraid we sometimes "throw out the baby" (some degree of modesty, mystery and respect for privacy) with the "bathwater" (prudery and exploitation and suppression of women). There is undoubtedly some healthy mid-point between the ultra-restrictive *burka* worn by many Moslem women and the long dresses and bonnets of the Amish, and the see-through gowns, string bikinis, plunging necklines, and skin-tight clothing currently in vogue.

I was amused when, just a few weeks after I had written these paragraphs, the editors of *Playboy* magazine announced that they were putting clothes back on their models. This was not because they reached the conclusion that some greater degree of modesty and respect are important, but because full nudity no longer has the same commercial value that it once had. Nudity and pornography are so readily available that they no longer sell magazines, so the number of subscriptions to *Playboy* had fallen precipitously. The publishers and editors needed to find some other way to sell their magazines.

Because we still carry with us some of that old respect for privacy and modesty, we are a bit hesitant to reveal any of the details of our own intimate communications during those days, but we have agreed that perhaps it would be appropriate to include just two from the "love letters" that we exchanged during the 21 months that we were apart. On page six of an eight page letter that is actually the second letter dated November 14, 1955, Ruth wrote to me in Texas in her beautiful, flowing, cursive penmanship:

I love you, my dear, and I miss you so. I want you to enjoy the things I am enjoying, and live in my experiences with me. I want to be where you are and live with you there also. I want you to love me and be my husband soon, but it will all be this way really very soon. You're my darling, my friend, my companion, my helper, my husband. You

are the most wonderful thing here on earth and God has made you to love me! Oh, honey---I can't say anymore, I can only feel it. I love you so much!

On November 22, 1955, I wrote to Ruth from Texas in my scratchy, sometimes nearly illegible block printing (done with fountain pens that too frequently ran out of ink mid-letter):

Honey, I love and appreciate you so much I feel extremely frustrated when I sit here—so full, so inadequately talking with you. I love you, my beautiful one. I'm thankful for you, I know you, I feel you with me, I desire to become more worthy of being yours, I desire to give more of myself to and for you, I am yours to have, to love, to keep, to help! My sweet and awesome wonderful friend, darling and wife, I love you with all that I am and possess! I love you—is all I feel and wish to let you know.

Some differences in perspectives did intrude now and then, however. We were both concerned that I was not “growing spiritually” in the same way that Ruth was and we wondered what might happen when we were back together again. We thought that attending an IVCF camp might help us get back on the same page. Ruth was also concerned about my very negative attitude toward the military, especially my feelings about the officers in charge and my willingness to look for ways to avoid or escape from the duties to which I was assigned. She was especially upset when I once missed a flight from Tokyo back to Korea because I had miscalculated the dates on the calendar. I was pretty sure that Ruth could not possibly even begin to imagine the circumstances in which I found myself, partly because she was comfortably isolated on her college campus, surrounded with Christian friends, and was not at all in touch with the “real world” as I was experiencing it. We wrote a lot about things related to our financial situation and shared a concern that we might have been too hung up on money matters. Some things don't change much.

There were a couple of episodes that further illuminate what our relationships were like during the months when we were engaged but living far apart. While I was at Fort Sam Houston in Texas, my friend Frank Morrow invited me to join him and his friend from college days, “Aunt Betty,” and her friend, “Aunt Jody” (Yes, we actually called them that!) on a “date” to see a play. Betty and Jody were young officers (second lieutenants), nurses who were at Fort Sam Houston taking army training in physical therapy. All four of us were engaged to other people at the time, so this seemed like a very innocent social outing. But as soon as I agreed to join the group, I began to have serious second thoughts. I was not at all concerned about what my relationship with Jody might turn out to be, nor about what Ruth might think because I was sure that our relationship was really solid, but I was worried about what my fellow soldiers might think. Here I was, supposedly a nice Christian boy, stepping out

on my fiancé back in California! What kind of testimony would that be? As it turned out, the group expanded to seven, so some of my anxieties were alleviated. But Frank and I decided later that we should say “Good bye” to our two “auntie” friends before we all left Texas so the four of us spent an evening window shopping in downtown San Antonio and talking about our fiancés and thoughts about our weddings. I guess I was no longer so concerned about my “testimony” since we would all be going off on our separate ways shortly. “Aunt Jody” sent a congratulatory telegram at the time of our wedding.

Ruth experienced similar complexities in her relationship with Roland Bergthold when he transferred from Reedley College to UCSB. Roland was a fellow member of the First Mennonite Church in Reedley and he was also an active member of the IVCF groups at both Reedley College and UCSB. Ruth and Roland became very close friends at UCSB and they spent a lot of time together. Again, we were so secure in our commitment to one another that this was not really a matter of concern to Ruth and me, but Ruth was worried that her friends might view her friendship with Roland as a betrayal of her commitment to me. Ruth thought things needed to be cooled off a bit when Roland once kissed her on the nose when she was not feeling well. Both my relationship with Jody and Ruth’s with Roland seemed to be quite innocent but they were nevertheless fraught with what seemed like difficult moral ambiguities. Neither of us ever entertained the thought that maybe we should just be quiet about things like this. Total honesty and transparency were the order of the day.

Unfortunately, our collection of old love letters ends with letters dated September 1956. We have not been able to locate the letters that we exchanged between the fall of 1956 and my departure from Korea in April 1957. I was discharged from the army in Fort Ord near Monterey on May 2, 1957. Ruth drove the 1948 Chevrolet coupe that I had paid for so Ruth could drive to and from her student teaching assignments, from Santa Barbara up to Fort Ord to meet me and we drove together to Reedley. I had not driven, or even been a passenger in a normal automobile in normal traffic for the 16 months that I had been away in Korea and Japan, so Ruth laughed at me when I started to drive along the freeway at about 35 miles per hour. Ruth then returned to Santa Barbara to complete her spring semester, finish preparations for our imminent wedding, and become re-adjusted to her recently discharged soon-to-be husband. Poor Ruth. All I had to do was learn to live in the U.S. as a civilian again (including getting up to speed on the highway), but this was soon complicated by my becoming a husband, college student, and father, all in a brief period of less than one year.

MARRIAGE

Several things, besides the fact that it took place on a Thursday evening, made our wedding marginally different from what was normal in our social circles in those days. Ruth sewed her own wedding gown and some of the bride's maids' dresses, and her mother did the wedding cake, so our wedding was comparatively inexpensive. There were about 400 guests, somewhat more than usual, since I had many relatives in the area and our friendship circles included people from Immanuel, Reedley High School, Reedley College, our respective congregations, the Selma Chapel, UCSB, IVCF acquaintances and good friends of our parents. In order to avoid the usual wait to sign the guest book, our guests signed individual cards, which we collected and later posted in the back of our wedding album. Ruth and I composed our own wedding vows rather than using one of the set formulas that were available. One of the guests was Daniel Pinkard, "Pinky," an African-American friend of Ruth's from UCSB-- something not often seen in Reedley at that time, when there was still an informal "sundown" rule that no persons of color were permitted to be in town after dark. He even kissed Ruth in the reception line! We are not sure what our relatives and friends made of that.

Just before the ceremony, while we men in the wedding party were waiting in the choir room just off the platform, my brother Harold, who was my best man, announced that he could not find the wedding band I was to put on Ruth's finger. Of course we paid no attention, thinking this was just one of those typical best man pranks. Until Harold turned red and began to perspire. This was no joke! At the last minute we happened to find the ring in the cuff of one of the choir robes hanging on a rack in the choir room, where Harold had accidentally dropped it. Because neither of our Reedley pastors was available that evening, Mel Friesen officiated. Mel was a leader in IVCF and the son of a former MB pastor, so he understood our situation very well. We had great respect and affection for him and were very glad that he could perform the ceremony for us. Unlike many of the weddings we have attended recently, our reception did not include a dinner, and there was certainly no alcohol or dancing. A wedding cake baked by Ruth's mom, some nuts, tea, coffee and punch out on the church lawn were about it.

Our honeymoon came in two stages. Immediately following the ceremony and reception, friends Dwight and Fayrene Hofer drove us to where we had hidden our car in a barn out in the country—to avoid things like smelly cheese smeared on the engine, tin cans tied to the bumper, or more serious acts of vehicular vandalism. We drove to the Casa Grande Motel just south of Madera (later a farm labor camp but at the time of our marriage one of the nicer motels in the area) for our first night of wedded

bliss. **(Photo #11)** One of the advantages of entering marriage with limited experience and a lot of naivete, is that this makes possible some really great surprises.

The rest of this first stage of our two-part honeymoon consisted of a trip to San Francisco and then down to Monterey and the 17-mile Drive in Carmel. We were back in Reedley by Monday evening ready to go back to work, only to discover that someone had broken into our rented house and messed some things up, the remnant of an old tradition of *shivaree*, which, in our day, meant little more than doing minor acts of vandalism to a newly married couple. For example, when we visited our newly wed IVCF friends, John Robert and Marilyn Aiken, in Berkeley, Marilyn's home-made strawberry topping for our ice cream tasted really terrible because someone had sneaked into their apartment and switched the salt and sugar in their containers. One night just at bedtime someone fired a shotgun outside the bedroom window of our little house out in a nectarine orchard. No one ever confessed, so to this day we do not know who did that. *Shivaree* (The French word is *charivari*.) is a custom that had pretty much died out by the middle of the twentieth century, but it was an old tradition in small rural villages in many countries in Europe. Originally the main point was to make a lot of noise with pots and pans, etc. as a way of expressing disapproval for some unacceptable behavior such as marrying too soon after the death of a spouse, or wife-beating. By our day it was just a friendly way of giving newlyweds a hard time.

The second stage of our honeymoon came later in the summer when we drove across the continent to attend a month-long IVCF camp in Ontario, Canada. At the last minute before we left on our trip we were asked by IVCF if we were willing to transport a young couple from England to the east coast where they were scheduled for some meetings. This was the second round of honeymooning for us, so we agreed. Our passengers were IVCF staff member Dr. V. S. Carrington (Tony) Tyndale, and his wife, Penelope (Penny). Among many other things, Dr. Tyndale went on to serve as director of IVCF Canada for more than 25 years and he also directed mission programs in Africa, taught at Wycliffe College in the University of Toronto and was the first chancellor of Tyndale College and Seminary in Toronto. We had no idea at the time that we were spending a week in our car with a person who would become an international evangelical celebrity.

We had several adventures along the way. First, our brand new 1957 Pontiac Chieftain (partially a wedding gift from my car-dealer father) stopped dead on the road over Tioga Pass high above Yosemite National Park. The road at that time was still narrow, crooked, rough, and mostly unpaved. After several futile attempts to solve the problem, which we mistakenly thought was the "vapor lock" that

frequently happened to cars at high elevations in those days, we finally used an emergency phone to call for a tow truck to take us up to the service station in Tuolumne Meadows. The best guess was that our fuel pump was malfunctioning, so after spending the night behind the service station in our sleeping bags, we called for a mechanic to bring a new fuel pump from Lee Vining on the east side of the Sierras. When the mechanic finally arrived he found that our fuel pump was fine. He eventually discovered that the problem was that the fuel line had been installed in such a way that as the loaded car bounced up and down on the rough old Tioga Pass road, the rear axle pinched the fuel line and then wore a hole in the line, so the fuel pump was drawing air instead of gasoline. Problem solved with pliers, black friction tape (in those days before “duct tape”) and some money. The more serious cost was about 24 hours of lost travel time.

Our plan was to spend one night “camping,” the next night in a motel. So somewhere along the way we drove off the highway onto a dirt road, put our suitcases against the car to serve as a windbreak, filled our air mattresses, and tried to go to sleep. We soon discovered that we had set up our little camp about 50 yards from railroad tracks, so during the night trains rumbled through with some frequency. Even more troublesome was the worst infestation of mosquitoes that I have ever experienced. In the early morning light we discovered that we were surrounded by a herd of inquisitive cattle. I expect that Britishers Tony and Penny Tyndale carried these memories with them, as we have.

Campus in the Woods was an IVCF camp facility on the shores of a beautiful lake in the Ontario woods. The big excitement of the camp experience for us came when the camp medical doctor explained that Ruth was not feeling well because she was pregnant. This also explained why she had vomited in Gary, Indiana—and many other strange things that had been going on during our trip across the country. On the one hand, this pregnancy came as a huge shock for us, not only because this was not how we had planned things, but also because the doctor who had done Ruth’s premarital examination told her that she would likely have difficulty becoming pregnant because she had a “tipped uterus.” But, on the other hand, birth control technology failed with some frequency in those days, so pregnancy was not actually all that big a surprise given the natural sequence of things.

But this big surprise did cause us to scramble to make some quick adjustments. Since Ruth would still be in school during the fall semester because she was working on both teaching and speech and hearing therapy credentials, and our baby would be born in March or April, she would not be able to get a teaching job to support me through school as we had anticipated. So we needed to return to California to earn some extra money during what was left of the summer and to exchange our new 1957 Pontiac

for something much cheaper (a 1950 Chevrolet coupe, as it turned out). So we left Campus in the Woods and drove back across the country in such a big hurry that we did not even wait for the Old Faithful geyser in Yellowstone National Park to blow out its steam. Terri was born in Santa Barbara on April 3, 1958, nine months and two weeks after our wedding. But, when the bulletin in the First Mennonite Church in Reedley mistakenly reported that Terri had been born on February 3, Ruth's father felt that it was necessary to publish a correction the next week since this would mean that Terri was born "too soon." People counted months in those days and it was still important that the proper sequence be followed, which we did. It was just at an accelerated pace.

Of course marriage was not only about weddings, honeymoons, sex, and pregnancies. It was also about two very young people adjusting to life together, and this is one way in which I think the analogy of a bicycle-built-for-two is apt. It went without saying that the husband would ride in front and do the steering. It seemed natural that a husband should be a little bit older, taller, richer, and stronger (and smarter, too) than the wife. Women usually married "up," men married "down." Husbands should be the "head of the household" because that is the order that had been ordained by God at the time of creation. A wife took her husband's name. So the expectations of what each of us thought our roles would be were pretty clear in the 1950s. The wife (including Ruth) would mostly take care of the inside household tasks, including child care, and the husband (including me) would mostly take care of the outside work, including having primary responsibility for providing income for the family. The fact that Ruth claimed that at the time of our marriage the only thing she knew how to do in the kitchen was boil water was only a minor temporary issue, because we both knew that she would learn to do what was expected of her as a good wife: She would learn to do the cooking. In fact, in her letters to me from UCSB she frequently mentioned how much she was looking forward to cooking for us so I would not have to complain about army "chow" (food) any longer. She also wrote that she was glad that she had learned to use her parents' new washing machine so she would be able to take care of our laundry after we were married. Similarly with infant and child care, it seemed natural that Ruth would take care of the kids when they cried or called at night—and not only because she was nursing a newborn. That is just what a wife and mother did. I might "help" with the dishes, or housework, or child care, but putting it in those terms only reinforced the expectation that we each had our own separate sets of responsibilities. We had to stay coordinated and headed in the same direction but we each had our own separate peddling to do. I am pretty sure that if someone had predicted that by 2015 "stay at home dads" would be a common phenomenon, even in Mennonite and evangelical circles, we

would have been quite sure that could never happen because it would be a violation of God's "order" for relationships in a marriage.

This division of life into separate spheres of domesticity, where wives created a refuge from the cruel, hard outside world of work from which the husband needed to retreat for rest and renewal at home was part of a heritage that began with industrialization, or maybe with capitalism, as Marx suggested. Prior to that time most work was done in or around the home and many members of the household were typically involved in both the housework and the farming or manufacturing work that provided subsistence for the family. This old pattern was still apparent in the way my grandparents lived and worked. Both were involved in doing most of the many different tasks and chores that were needed to keep a farm going. But Ruth and I both knew from TV and other purveyors of the common cultural expectations what our respective roles would be.

I think marrying someone with similar cultural and religious backgrounds made these and many other adjustments relatively easy. Of course the Neufeld family did things somewhat differently from how things were done in my family, but I think the similarities were greater than the differences, especially with the widely shared expectation of how tasks would be divided between spouses. Unlike my mother, Ruth's mom repaired small household appliances, upholstered furniture and did woodworking. These are skill-sets that Ruth also acquired. I do think that the division of labor in most of the middle class families in America during our era came from expectations that were very widely shared in the period of the 1950s when the media portrayed family life as they did.

Of course things have changed dramatically in American culture since the 1950s. For example, all of our sons-in-law do much more of the food preparation than I (and most of my peers) ever did. One evening in 2011, I took a magazine advertisement for kitchen equipment to my anthropology class in Hesston College because to me the ad clearly reflected a very dramatic change in expectations concerning marital roles. The man in the ad was wearing an apron and was laboring at the kitchen range while the woman was obviously relaxed, leaning back against a counter, holding a puppy in her arm, and sipping a glass of wine. The students did not think the ad was as remarkable as I did because they had not grown up with the expectations about marital roles that I grew up with. To return to my bicycle-built-for-two analogy one last time, there is no longer a bicycle to climb onto. I think this reflects one of the big changes from the old world, where institutions provided individual "actors" with "roles" that had clearly defined "scripts" attached, to the new world where many cultural expectations

are weak, unclear, or non-existent, providing members with few rules or guidelines to follow. Each couple is free (or required) to scramble to figure out how to do it their own way.

Actually, Ruth rather quickly took on roles outside the household. In fact, unlike mine, her professional life has been extremely varied. She taught elementary school part-time while I finished my BA at UCSB and full time while I was working on my MA. We shared a janitorial job in a telephone company office during part of our time in Pasadena. We both taught at Osaka Shoin Women's College. We both studied Japanese for a time during our early missionary years, but I kept at it longer. Even being missionaries involved many shared responsibilities. Ruth taught for a time for the Clovis Unified School District and then did some testing for Fresno County Schools during our early years in Fresno. I have mentioned that she had the primary responsibility for restoring our old house on Kerckhoff and then she spent about seven years restoring old houses, mostly in the southeastern part of Fresno. She was so successful in her restoration endeavors that in June 1979 she received a formal "Certificate of Appreciation: In recognition for her role in the preservation of Fresno's fine old homes" from the Fresno City and County Historical Society. After helping to provide care for her mother during the latter years of her life, Ruth changed from "taking care of old houses to taking care of old people." As I said, after completing a Master of Science degree in Health Science Administration at CSUF, Ruth founded the Older Adult Social Services (OASIS) program under the administrative umbrella of Fresno Pacific. Her program was one of the first in California to provide social (not medical) day care for persons with dementia and other issues and respite for their care-givers. In this she was so successful that she was named as one of Fresno's top ten business and professional women.

Partly because of what we were each involved in outside of our home, we have changed over the years in how we divide the housework, but some patterns have persisted over time. Several years ago Ruth said that she enjoyed cooking but hated the clean-up, so I said "Deal! You cook, I'll clean up." And so it has been for several decades now. We share other tasks, too. As often as not, we make the bed together. Throughout the years of our marriage we have maintained a tradition of a brief spoken prayer before breakfast. To keep things equitable, I offer the prayer on odd days of the month, Ruth on even days. There are some things that Ruth never or rarely does: wash the car, or drive when we are both in the car; yard and garden work; vacuum and dust; breakfast preparations; set the table when we have guests. I am responsible for watering our house plants. There are other things that Ruth always (or almost always) does besides almost all of the food preparation, except for breakfast and making coffee, which have long been my responsibilities: mop the tile floors; clean the bathrooms and shower stall;

seasonal deep cleaning; laundry. Ruth does all of our financial record-keeping, including filing tax returns. Ruth somehow finds joy in shopping in thrift stores, which I find really depressing—but I will accompany her on occasion. Like others in her family, Ruth loves to play table games, something I join her in doing mainly as a matter of spousal obligation. (Not that there is anything wrong with doing some things out of a sense of obligation.) I do some of the grocery shopping, but she does much more than I.

Patterns have changed somewhat with changing circumstances, so I tried harder to do more of the household tasks when Ruth was under pressure during her years of house remodeling and directing the OASIS and Goldensun programs. And she did more when I was stressed over administrative work at the college or CCCMB. Ruth did pretty much everything while we were in Hesston in 2010 – 2011 and during the first several months after my motorcycle accident in 2011 when I was in a wheelchair and then my mobility was severely limited. I did more of the household tasks during the year (2014) when she was the director of Goldensun in Phoenix. So we have tried to think of housework as a shared responsibility and we have worked at achieving some degree of parity in how the tasks are divided.

We thought that we had taken a fairly enlightened approach to the distribution of household tasks—until Ruth pointed out some years ago that it is usually the woman who is responsible for tasks that must be done on a fixed schedule or that require immediate attention (e.g. preparing meals, feeding infants, changing diapers) while men usually end up with tasks that can be done on a more flexible schedule (e.g. yard work, washing the car, even vacuuming and doing the dishes). So the patriarchal patterns that have been prevalent in so many societies throughout so much of human history continue to cast their long shadows over how our marital roles are divided. Gender equity is a most elusive goal.

CHILD REARING

It is more difficult for me to reflect on what is undoubtedly the most important responsibility that married couples or any other configuration of persons who become parents can have, and that is child-rearing. This is difficult because I do not think we ever really articulated a clear philosophy of childrearing. This became painfully clear in what was one of the most traumatic and embarrassing experiences that happened during our many years in Japan. During our second year in Japan, Mrs. Unno, one of our Japanese language teachers, approached us one day to ask if we would be willing to appear on a morning talk show on her husband's TV channel. Her husband was a newscaster on one

of the major TV stations in Osaka. Mr. Unno's talk show host colleague wanted to interview some Americans about family life in America, so our teacher asked us if we were willing to do this. Of course we said "No" because our Japanese was not anywhere near good enough for an interview on TV. She assured us that our Japanese language ability was very adequate and she promised that the host would use simple vocabulary and grammatical forms of the Japanese language that we could understand and respond to. No problem. We had great respect and appreciation for Unno-sensei, so, when she persisted, we finally agreed to give it a try. We were driven to the studio from our home in Toyonaka and spent some time conversing with the host before the broadcast began.

As promised, during our informal chat before the show, over coffee and sweets, the host used vocabulary and forms of the Japanese language with which we were familiar and we got along just fine. Until the cameras came on and we were live on the air. Everything changed! The interviewer used vocabulary and complex grammatical forms with which we were not yet familiar. It was dreadful. We finally figured out that his first question was something like "What philosophy do American parents use in raising their children?" We realized that we not only lacked the Japanese vocabulary and grammar to even understand, much less respond to this difficult and complicated question, but we also had no good answer at all, not for all Americans and not even for ourselves. We had never really thought about it in those terms. So I think we probably mumbled something about America being a very large country with many different cultural groups, each with their own customs. I do not really remember. What I do remember is the feeling of being totally stupid, as much for getting into this impossible situation as for not having a good answer to the question.

I do not think we ever wrote down, or even spoke out loud to one another, just what our "philosophy of childrearing" would be, but I do think there are some things that we did try to keep in mind, for better and for worse. I think we tried to pass on the idea, from the old world undoubtedly, that hierarchies and boundaries are important. So adults, including people like parents and teachers, should be respected, and, if that was not possible, they should at least be obeyed. Our obligation as parents was to have expectations for which we could give reasonable (at least to us) explanations, and then to provide rewards (positive and negative) for how our kids responded. We intended that communication should remain open and that we would make every effort to take seriously the questions, objections, and alternatives that our children offered. We tried not to use "Because I say so." as a reason for doing (or not doing) things and we did not often resort to physical punishment as a response to what the kids said or did, or did not do—though I am sure that we failed on all of those accounts more often than we

should have. After all, we were still part of an era in which sayings like “Children are to be seen and not heard.” and “Spare the rod, spoil the child.” were still often cited as appropriate guidelines for how to raise children.

When we were children ourselves, many of us in our generation experienced personally what “the rod” meant. I do not know how widespread this practice was, but at least some of our age mates report experiences similar to what I mentioned in my description of some of the consequences of some of the destructive play in which my cousins and I engaged during my childhood. For the really serious transgressions, spankings were administered by our fathers. When our mothers said “We will wait until dad gets home!” that started a period of anxious dread that lasted for however long it took dad to return home. His return was followed by a session in the bathroom where we would receive a painful spanking, usually with dad’s bare hand, but sometimes with a leather shaving strap or belt. One friend reported that his farmer father sent him out to a windbreak between fields to cut his own stick that his dad then used for the spanking. I do not think fear of our fathers was a part of our culture in the same way that it was in Japan in the old days, but a division of labor between fathers and mothers in our old world did include fathers playing a dominant role as administrators of punishments. I also think that the cultural guidelines for what behaviors were acceptable and what were not were much clearer in that old world. Writing philosophies of childrearing and making lists of principles and priorities did not seem to be necessary. They were just taken for granted as a natural part of our “common sense,” and what (almost) everyone else was doing.

Perhaps another reason that we did not articulate any one particular philosophy of childrearing is that we discovered early on that each child is radically different from every other. Offering generalizations about an individual human being is always at least as difficult and complicated as making generalizations about a culture like Japan or America, and, as I said, I have never really tried to develop a vocabulary for describing or analyzing personality or character. Nevertheless, with some fear and trembling, I will offer a few suggestions about how our children differed from one another. To be very selective and to greatly over-generalize: Terri seemed to have been born with a very rational mind and she always seemed to be mature for her age. We could usually find a way to negotiate agreements with her. It was no surprise when she eventually became an attorney, and, then, an Ohio State University law professor. **(Photo #51)** Connie always had a genius for redefining in her own creative way whatever seemed to us to be perfectly self-evident. Her logic frequently differed from ours, so we sometimes found it difficult to get on the same page. Her lifelong gift for seeing things through different lenses

was surely fine preparation for her work as a counselor for children and families, and we hear many expressions of appreciation for her insightful contributions to discussions at CCCMB/WAMC. **(Photo #52)** Karen often responded to any hint of criticism even before we could get it out. She was not only almost always a “good kid,” but she often made great effort to help others around her who were struggling. She had people who were “projects.” It was no surprise that she combined her sensitivity to the needs of others with her ability to keep things organized in her service as a social worker and health care administrator. **(Photo #53)** So whatever we tried to do—explanations, or role modeling, or positive rewards, or punishments, or whatever—the responses of our children differed from one another. Not only that, but we kept hearing reports from people who observed our children in settings away from our home that they behaved very differently when they were in different settings from what we saw at home.

One example of how differently our children responded to the same circumstance is how they each responded to the *many* times that we moved during their growing-up years. We moved 16 times during the first 16 years of our marriage, including six times back and forth across the Pacific Ocean. Connie seemed to respond with a need for more of a sense of “place,” so she and Kevin have lived in two houses within the same block on Kerckhoff Avenue where she grew up throughout most of the more than 30 years of their marriage. Terri and Dan have moved around some, in Indiana and Ohio mostly, but Karen and Mark seem to feel free to be even more mobile than we have been. They have lived and worked in Haiti, Costa Rica, North Carolina, Washington, D.C., and Hood River, Oregon. During 2014-15 they were in Madagascar. They moved to Fiji in the winter of 2016, to Myanmar late in 2017, and back to Hood River in 2019 and they have recently remodeled a house across the Columbia River in White Salmon, Washington. So any philosophy of childrearing that we might have adopted would have had to be built on a foundation of flexibility from person to person and adaptability from situation to situation. Perhaps good parents have always known these things, but understanding individual differences and developmental changes is probably one of the insights that the new world gets better than we did in the old.

There are other things that we might have considered, but we were too much children of our own era to even notice. A few examples: I have very crooked teeth. (They are so crooked that Ruth says that if she had ever looked into my mouth she never would have married me.) But I do not recall that my parents or I ever even considered that we might pay an orthodontist to straighten them. Neither do I recall that we ever considered having our own children’s teeth straightened. That was not a big part of

the culture of our generation—and it was certainly not part of the culture in Japan when we were there, so it was not something that we even thought about. Perhaps we could have benefited at some point from some form of family counseling, but this was not part of our culture, either. During the time that we were first being processed for missionary service in Japan, we contacted a psychologist friend to ask whether there was some kind of “screening” that he could suggest that would help us predict whether being missionaries in another culture would be a good psychological “fit” for us. His response was that he knew both of our families and he knew us personally, so on the basis of that he could predict that we would be just fine. Other than that, I do not recall that we ever seriously thought about receiving formal counseling. In retrospect, family studies were part of my graduate program in sociology, so it might seem that I should have known better, but the emphasis in my academic work was on big “macro” issues of cross-cultural comparisons and patterns of social change, so these more practical “micro” things were not much on my agenda. I think the new world does better on some of these kinds of issues, too, than the old world did.

We not only brought the ethos of the 1950s into our family relationships, but we also brought many of the traits and characteristics that were common in Mennonite and other Dutch or German ancestry families. If typical family relationships can be located along a continuum from “warm” to “cool,” both Ruth and I grew up in families that were relatively “cool,” meaning that there were not a lot of verbal and physical expressions of affection. We also spent many years in Japan where family (and other) relationships were almost universally very “cool,” meaning that there was little physical contact between family members, or anyone else, for that matter, and many things were left unspoken both inside the family and beyond. There was never any doubt at all that our parents cared for and were committed to us, but expressing this verbally with words like “I love you.” or physically with hugs and kisses was simply not a big part of our family experience for either one of us. In fact, my main recollection of my relationship with our father during our growing up years is that he was frequently absent. I remember having to wait for supper until dad returned from “the station” so we could all eat together. It took a lot of unscheduled time for a car dealer to keep his customers happy! I also remember that during many evenings he was away for church meetings and committee business. I can only recall a couple of family vacations: a time or two in a rented cabin up at Huntington Lake and occasional trips down to the Los Angeles area to visit Uncle Art and Aunt Ruby. Those LA trips sometimes also included visits to the beaches in Long Beach and Santa Monica.

One of our shocks in reading the letters that we exchanged during the 21 months that I was in the Army is just how freely and frequently Ruth and I expressed our love for one another at that point in our lives. But, for reasons good and bad, those “warm” patterns of relationship did not last. In retrospect, I think we should have recognized that our children were growing up surrounded by a culture that valued family relationships that were “warmer” than what we were doing. We probably should have adjusted, but we were not tuned in enough to realize what was going on, so we mostly just carried forward the “cool” patterns that we had inherited. We thought Tevye’s very practical answers to the question asked by his wife in *Fiddler on the Roof* “Do you love me?” might have been good enough.

One thing that we did often say to one another and to others was that if our children turned out to be “good” people (whatever that might mean), we would not take all of the credit—and if they did not turn out so well, we would not accept all of the blame, either. Of course parents are a huge influence on children, but parents are by no means the only shapers of who and what kids become. Teachers, friends, the media, extended family, church, neighbors, travel, DNA and the entire network of social relationships all have their impacts. So, we felt that part of our obligation as parents was to weave our kids into a fabric of relationships and activities that would represent our best hopes for what we would like to see them become. We hoped that spending many years in Japan would help them grow up with an expansive view of the world—and that returning to California would help them to connect with their familial, cultural and religious roots. We encouraged (or required, actually, since we offered them little choice) their participation in the relationships and activities at CCCMB and in the Kerckhoff neighborhood because we wanted them to be surrounded by people who shared many of the values that we held dear and that we wanted them to carry with them into their futures, albeit in revised forms. We were happy to support them in their decisions to attend Mennonite schools because we felt that these schools, more than any of the other available options, provided healthy environments in which to form relationships and develop the values that we hoped would shape how they lived their adult lives. Of course it helped a lot that our children could attend Pacific tuition-free and they were eligible for tuition discounts at other Mennonite colleges because of my position on the faculty at Fresno Pacific, so their private educations were relatively inexpensive.

We knew that none of these institutions, relationships or activities was in any way perfect and there were no guarantees, because human beings are, after all, each individual subjects and not simply puppets or programmed robots, but we do think our efforts to “set up” our kids so they would turn out “well” were remarkably successful. In many respects, this strategy worked. Our children, their spouses,

and our grandchildren and their spouses and “significant others” are, each in their own way, wonderful human beings—and there is every indication that our great-grandchildren, too, will follow along these same paths. **(Photo #54)** They are all very smart and they value learning. They work hard in service to others. They travel and are open to the world in their outlook. They are committed to strong marriage and family relationships, but they are also accepting and respectful of alternative patterns of relationships. They are anything but narrow minded provincials! They maintain close and mutually supportive circles of friendship and they happily enjoy doing things together, even with their in-laws. They love nature and respect the environment. They enjoy music and they appreciate the other arts. They know how to “play” much better than we ever did. We would prefer that more of our descendants would also value the commitments to the church that have been so important in our lives, but those who have disconnected from the church follow patterns that are common in their generations just as we conformed to patterns that were common in ours. **(Photo #50)**

One anecdote will illustrate what I mean when I say that our kids and their spouses are truly thoughtful and creative people who very successfully do projects together. As the time for the celebration of our 50th (Golden) wedding anniversary **(Photo #56)** approached, we made it clear that we did not want any more gifts of “stuff.” We are in a stage of life where we should be reducing, not adding to our collection of material goods. So, entirely unbeknownst to us, archivist son-in-law Kevin managed to locate a copy of a German chorale that Ruth’s grandfather, Wilhelm Neufeld, had composed (or arranged) in honor of the 50th anniversary celebration of his parents-in-law, the Gustav Rempels, in Russia in about 1905. Kevin had someone transcribe the old musical notation into something recognizable today. He had someone record the piece on a synthesizer, and then Kevin sent copies of the composition and the recording to each of our daughters and their spouses. Each of the couples rehearsed on their own and then during the days that we were together in Trinidad on the northern California coast for our anniversary celebration, they sneaked in some group rehearsal time so that one evening they could surprise us by performing, a cappella and in German, the five-part piece as our anniversary gift. We were surprised, pleased, and moved beyond words. We are pretty sure that this was the best and most creative Golden anniversary gift that any parents have ever received.

We will accept some, but not all, of the credit for the fine people that our children and grandchildren have become because we recognize that there is a lot of truth in the African proverb popularized by Hillary Clinton during her 2008 presidential campaign: “It takes a village to raise a child.” We tried to

surround our kids with one version of a village and we think it worked. We are very grateful to the many people and institutions around us who helped raise our children. **(Photo #57)**

“IT TAKES A VILLAGE...”

We hear many loud public (often political) voices these days making the case that “the family” (almost always meaning the nuclear family instead of the larger extended families that have been so important through most of human history) is the basic unit of society, the foundation upon which educational, economic, and political success in any society must be built. The nuclear family has indeed provided the most immediate context for intimate relationships for most members of most societies at most times throughout human history, but I think it is short-sighted to overemphasize the importance of this form of family because the shape of the family is always greatly impacted by what is happening in the surrounding culture and society. Family patterns change as the society around them changes. I will very briefly mention only two indicators of what I mean. Two important changes inside the family that originate in circumstances outside the family are average (mean) household size and rates of working mothers.

The average household in the U.S. in 1890 included about five persons. The average household in the U.S. in recent years has been just over one half that, around 2.6 persons. There are several reasons for this big change. First, more people are living alone now, so that impacts the average size of households, and there are fewer three-generation extended family households. Single person households have increased for several reasons: “post-boomers,” especially, are delaying marriage and parenthood, and longer life-expectancies mean that more widows and widowers end up living alone in their old age. In 1800, on average, each American woman gave birth to seven or eight children. This number was down to about 3.5 births per woman in 1900 and the average is now about 2.0 births per woman, so households typically include fewer children. A second very important change in the nature of the family in the U.S. is the number of mothers with young children who are employed outside the home. As recently as 1960, when we were young parents, only 18% of mothers with children younger than six years old were in the labor force. By 2011 that number had risen to 68%.

The only point I want to make with these numbers is that it does not make much sense to think that these changes originated inside the nuclear family. It makes much better sense to think that these changes inside the family are the result of technological, social, economic, cultural, and political

changes *outside* the nuclear family unit. To the extent that this is true, it is not helpful to blame the family for social ills like rising rates of births to unwed mothers, or kids performing poorly or dropping out of school altogether, or too much drug use by people who are too young. Challenges like these have as much to do with poverty and other social conditions as with relationships between spouses and between parents and children. To think otherwise can be an excuse for not making fundamental changes in the political and economic environment. It can be a form of “blaming the victim.” It is fine to “focus on the family,” but that should not be used as an excuse for ignoring the conditions in the surrounding society that profoundly impact what happens in patterns of relationships within the family, for better and for worse.

Finally, if there is any truth to the notion that “It takes a village to raise a child,” then it might be reasonable to ask what it takes to sustain a “village.” Villages provided a very important part of the social environment in which most human beings in most times and places lived their lives. But villages were always part of a larger fabric of social relationships that included other kinds of social structures such as extended families, tribes, clans, sibs and in some societies, moieties, in which the total society was divided into two halves, each of which had rules that governed relationships within each part of the society and relationships across the boundaries, including whom one should and should not marry. But what happens when villages and the supporting network of social relationships of which they are a part are lost as people move to towns and cities—and as urban life-patterns move out into the rural areas where traditional ways once prevailed? It is precisely the “village” quality of life that was central to all social relationships in the old world that we have lost.

For a while it seemed as if ethnic groups and religious denominations might serve as “carriers” for residuals of the old ways of life, replacing, to some degree at least, the older social structures that had included villages, tribes, clans, etc., even in urban areas. In 1962 Herbert Gans described people in an Italian ethnic neighborhood in Boston as *Urban Villagers*. The Mennonites are another example of the many ethno-religious communities in America, each of which constructed its own network of denominational institutions such as congregations, schools and colleges, camps, publishing houses, and small groups to support virtually every age and interest group that there is—from birth, to schools, to marriage, to retirement communities, to the cemeteries that were frequently located on church grounds. Ethno-religious denominations helped to “carry” the structured social relationships that functioned something like the old world of villages, tribes, clans, etc. We experienced our own version of that in Reedley and, in different forms, in Fresno, especially in our Kerckhoff “neighborhood community,”

and in other places where we have lived and worked, including in Kansas and Arizona for briefer periods of time. But I wonder what will happen in a new American society that is increasingly urban, “post-denominational,” “post-Christian,” “post-modern,” “post-religious,” “post-village,” and in which both ethnic and religious identities are increasingly “symbolic” rather than substantive—if they exist at all. Where will one then find the villages that will support spouses in their marriages, parents in raising their children, and the elderly in their dotage? The Amish, the Hutterites, and various Jewish, Muslim, Sikh and other ethno-religious sub-communities are still around to demonstrate the fact that it would be possible for us to choose to live lives that are substantially different from what most of us accept as “normal.” There are still some ethnic and religious enclaves in cities and towns, of course, and the Mormons are one example of a large contemporary community that still seems to have the vision, courage, energy and resources to create and sustain a fairly coherent and complete structure for life together in both rural and urban settings. The “Mega-churches” also seem to provide something like what ethnic groups and denominations once offered but on a smaller and more local scale.

We will not be here to see what happens when there are few or no “villages” around to support human beings in their various endeavors, including supporting marriages and the rearing of children, or if new functional equivalents of villages might emerge in the future, but it does seem to me that the loss of village life is one of the important dimensions of the transition from an old world to a new one.

LAST CHAPTERS

We did not really think very much about making financial preparations for our retirement years until late in the 1960s, by which time I had reached 35 years of age, we had been married for about thirteen years, and Terri was ready to enter middle school. As I have indicated, I had been either a student or working in Japan during almost all of the years since our marriage, so we had given little thought and had taken no concrete steps to prepare for whatever years we might have in retirement. By 1970 we were increasingly aware that what we were doing was quite irresponsible. We needed to take some steps to prepare a more secure financial future for ourselves and our children. It seemed to be quite clear that if we did not do this ourselves, no one else would do it for us. This realization was one important consideration in our decision to return to the U.S. when we did.

Because of the retirement plans offered by Fresno Pacific, combined with what we accumulated in our Social Security accounts administered by the U.S. government, and because of comparatively frugal spending habits, we entered retirement in 2000 with no serious concerns about our own financial future, and since none of our children or grandchildren gave any indication that they would need financial

assistance from us at any point in the foreseeable future, we felt quite secure in our financial situation. In fact, because of the sale of some property in 2004 we were able to give to our three children their “inheritance” earlier, when their financial needs were greater, rather than later, at the time of our deaths. And in 2012 we were again in a position to give substantial amounts of money to each of our four grandchildren. We were able to contribute more generously to Christian and other charitable causes after our retirement than we had at any previous time in our lives. Recent reports that more than one third of Americans approach old age with no resources at all set aside for their retirement years help us realize just how unusual and blessed we are to be as economically secure as we seem to be. We thought seriously about distributing our savings to others who were in greater economic need than we were but we decided that doing so might just mean that we would end up prematurely dependent on government or other charitable programs, so we now plan to distribute whatever remains of our financial resources after our deaths instead of before, according to priorities that are specified in our wills.

As we approached our mid-80s and as we observed the declining health, the physical and mental disabilities, and even the deaths of increasing numbers of our relatives and friends in our age cohort, we began to think more seriously about our “next steps.” The basic questions, as we discussed these matters with ourselves, our families and our friends, were: Should we make an early move into some kind of retirement community or should we remain in place until health or other circumstances make institutional assistance necessary? And if we decide to make a move sooner rather than later, where should we go?

We had assumed for a long time that “whenever the time comes,” we will move to Sierra View Homes (SVH) in Reedley. Ruth’s parents helped to build SVH and there is a long history of family connections with SVH. Not only did Ruth’s parents spend their last days there, but other family members have served on the board or worked as members of the staff and administration. Prices are very reasonable, SVH has a good reputation for providing quality services, and they recently became a Continuing Care Residential Community (CCRC) which means that they provide a full range of support services including independent living, assisted living, nursing care, and a facility serving persons who suffer from dementia. SVH also offers a guarantee that a resident will be able to move from one level of support to another as health conditions change. So we could rent a very nice apartment unit now for a very reasonable price and our care would be secure for the remainder of our lives.

We did have some reservations about SVH, however. Their small property is crowded with buildings and SVH is landlocked in one of the poorest and most troubled neighborhoods in Reedley. Many

residents in apartments on the perimeter of the property are afraid to use their front doors. The interiors of some of the older units leave much to be desired. Board leadership and other kinds of support for SVH have historically come from the First Mennonite Church, and since membership in that congregation is aging and attendance has declined precipitously (from a peak of around 400 to just 50 or 60 these days), we are not sure who will provide board leadership in the future. The complex is quite small, meaning that residents are with the same people, many of whom are in visibly declining health, day after day, and that can be depressing. We were also distressed to see that Ruth's sister, Freda, received less than optimal care and support during her stay in "Marden's Place," the SVH facility for persons with dementia.

So we decided to explore other options. We have not felt comfortable with the religious and political conservatism of the MB Palm Village (PV), the other CCRC in Reedley, so we do not think of that as an option for us—plus PV is more expensive than SVH. The only other CCRC in the Fresno area at the time was the San Joaquin Gardens (Terraces) complex in Fresno. While Terri, Dan and Karen were with us during the summer of 2013, we visited SVH and SJG. They reinforced the reservations we already had about SVH. SJG facilities are very nice and they provide excellent services, but even though several of our friends are residents there, we could not imagine paying the high price of residency to receive services that we do not need now, and perhaps we never will. More recently, the California Armenian Home near us here in Sunnyside expanded their offerings and became a second CCRC in Fresno. The reputation of their "The Vineyard" is excellent and their prices are somewhat more modest than the San Joaquin Gardens, so they are probably a second realistic option for us in this area. Our positive impressions were affirmed when we toured their facilities with our children when they visited during the Christmas season in 2018 and were further confirmed when we visit friends and acquaintances who have become residents in The Vineyard.

We had heard good reports about the "Mennonite Village" CCRC in Albany, Oregon, so we decided to visit there during the summer of 2013, while we were up in Hood River with Karen's family and Terri and Dan. We were so impressed that Ruth and I visited MV a second time on our drive back down to Fresno, and then we paid a third visit in October, this time for three days, and with our friends Edmund and Mary Janzen. Mary, unfortunately, suffered a stroke just as we arrived in Albany so our experience there was not quite what we had anticipated. We found fine facilities on 160 acres of Oregon green. Everything that we saw and heard indicated that residents are very happy with their lives in the Mennonite Village. Prices seemed to be reasonable—especially in comparison with San

Joaquin Gardens in Fresno. A move to Oregon seemed to almost make sense since that would put us in a more neutral, in-between location instead of being in close proximity to only Connie in Fresno, which would mean that she and Kevin would almost certainly bear the greatest burden of contacts and decision-making when and if our health declined. Showalter Villa in Kansas, which we briefly considered while we were in Hesston, also offered similarly fine facilities and a more neutral location, but none of our children would be in any kind of proximity. In Oregon, Karen and family would be in Hood River, about 2 ½ hours from Albany, and virtually all of Kevin's family reside in the Salem area, not far from Albany, so Connie's family would have multiple reasons to visit the area from time to time. It would make little difference to Terri and Dan whether their primary destination on the west coast would be Fresno or Portland. Ruth and I have almost always felt invigorated by new locations, relationships and experiences, and the fact of the matter was that we were not actually all that involved with people and institutions in Fresno (except for family and a few good friends) so it was not difficult for us to imagine a move to a new part of the country.

All of these calculations changed, though, when Karen and Mark decided to re-locate to Madagascar because of Mark's new position as COO of the MicroCred organization. Their decision to leave Oregon confirmed our suspicion that long-term residence in one spot cannot be assumed in this mobile new world, and this made it easier for us to decide that we would just stay where and as we are, for the next while, at least. Moving to be near one's children is all-too-often not a very good bet to make. We also paid a visit to the large Covenant Church retirement complex in Turlock, about one hour north of Fresno, but we could think of many reasons why a move to Turlock would not make much sense for us, and few reasons why we should even consider such a move.

Our current thinking in 2021 is still that we will remain here in our condo, care for one another as long as we are able, hire assistance as we need it, and then we will move to The Vineyard here in Fresno, Sierra View Homes in Reedley or some other facility in the area when our health needs or other circumstances make institutional support necessary. We trust that when the next big surprises come we will still have the energy and wisdom to respond appropriately, with the good advice of our children, grandchildren, and friends who might still be able to offer help.

FINAL REFLECTIONS

As I come to the end, finally, of these many recollections and reflections, I would like to summarize as clearly and concisely as I can what I think the story of my life reflects. I have tried to make the case that, like many others in my generation, I have lived through a transition from the remnants of an “old world” in which the institutions of society were still mostly integrated and cohesive to a “new world” in which social institutions are more specialized, segmented, and compartmentalized. I have lived a good part of my life in a world in which I was still mostly with the same people, whether I was working, playing, studying, or worshipping, and I shared with many of these folks a common history, culture and faith. Some of these people were also my neighbors and my relatives.

I have tried to illustrate from my own experiences and observations the sociological truism that not much of that old world remains any longer. Most of us have learned how to move from one specialized social institution to another in the course of our daily lives without even thinking about it very much. We take it for granted that we will be with different people and will behave somewhat differently as we move from one social setting to another: from home with family, to school or work, to gym or golf course, to the offices of legal, medical and financial professionals, to shopping malls, supermarkets and auto repair shops, to the government post office, the DMV, or the voting booth, and then back home to family again, where we go online, play games, watch TV, and read newspapers, books and magazines (often on “devices”) that open even more windows on even more diverse social worlds. Once a week or so, declining numbers of us might attend church for a worship service—but we do so with decreasing frequency and with diminishing levels of active participation. We might have circles of friends or acquaintances in some, or even all of these institutional settings, but we do not assume, as we did in the old world, that we will meet the same people as we move from one specialized institution to another, nor do we take it for granted that we will share a common history, culture or religious faith with the many and varied folks we encounter in each of these diverse settings. In fact, the rules of “professionalism” and “confidentiality” mean that we intentionally construct walls between the various segments of our lives so that one institution remains separate from the other. Just as we try to keep church and state separate, we also try not to take our work home with us, preserving our homes as private spaces. We are expected to prevent family matters from distracting us in our places of work

(and play) and we certainly do not privilege family relationships in hiring and promoting professional staff or colleagues, because that would be “nepotism.” Rules of confidentiality mean that often we do not even speak in one social setting about what happens in another. As is said of what happens in Las Vegas, we often expect that what happens at work (or home or play or church) will stay there.

For the many of us in my generation who grew up in the context of an ethno-religious community like the Mennonites, religion played a unique role. In many ways, religion was not just another one of the several separate social institutions in which we participated, but the church served as a kind of “center” that helped hold all of society and culture together. Religion provided a “sacred canopy” of meanings and practices that helped to make coherent and bind together the several institutional “organs” of the community as an “organism” (to use a very old metaphor for society). The church had a big impact on how we thought and acted in all of the other spheres of life: family, school, work and play. Of course the changing social context also impacted the church, but religion still supplied the “meta-narrative,” the big story that made sense of where we came from and how we should live our lives as individuals and as a community. The church provided the heroes and role models that helped us know how we ought to behave and the church provided the rituals and other practices in which our deepest values were acted out together with others in our community.

The centrality of religion in the old world was a lot more than just symbolic. I have tried to illustrate that by recounting the many ways in which the institutions in which we lived and that helped to give structure to our lives were integrated and overlapped. We carried something of that old quality of a “village” type of social life with us as we built institutions in Fresno, where Fresno Pacific, the College Community Church, the Kerckhoff neighborhood, the OASIS program, and more, were all shaped by a common past and a common vision, and together they provided us with many of the social relationships in which we lived our personal and family lives. We met many of the same people in each of these social settings and I really do think that our religious convictions and practices served as a kind of “glue” that helped to hold things together. Our shared faith helped to give our lives structure and meaning that transcended just our own personal and family stories and interests.

Of course this also meant that our social lives were quite narrowly circumscribed, and perhaps even boring. At least it must look that way to folks who enjoy much broader participation in the incredibly rich social and cultural resources that even a medium-sized city like Fresno has to offer. And, since there are always limits to one’s supply of time, energy, and money, it is hard to have it both ways. We were so heavily engaged in our small social and religious worlds that we did not really have much time

or energy left for other things. And, conversely, people who take fuller advantage of the many things that the city and the world of nature that surround us have to offer are less likely to have the kind of time and energy to invest in the church that we did. In the process, commitments to the church change from being the “center” of life to being but one of many separate institutional compartments, each with its own special focus, function, rewards and social sub-community. Religion becomes just another one of the many slices in our big social pie, and for increasing numbers of people, the religion slice seems to be shrinking in size with each passing decade. For many, it is no longer part of the pie at all.

In fact, I think now that this change from religion as the center of life to social life with no particular center at all is one of the biggest changes that has happened during my lifetime. Declining membership, less frequent attendance, budget problems, the decreasing reported “salience” (or importance) of religion and the increasing numbers of people with no institutional religious attachments at all (the “nones” and the “dones”), especially among the younger generations, all indicate that religion is central in the lives of fewer and fewer Americans. Work, or preparing for work, or looking for work, or recovering from work seem to consume more and more of the time and energy of many people these days, but I doubt that work can ever really provide the same kind of personal and social center that the church once did. Various kinds of hobbies and recreation are important to many people but I doubt that citizenship in the “Raiders’ Nation,” acquaintances in the neighborhood bar (even if it is a place “Where everybody knows my name,” as in the old *Cheers* TV series), or at the gym, or one’s golfing buddies, or support groups of various kinds can ever really provide the center for personal meaning and institutional action together that religion did in the old world. And when shopping around for a church looks much the same as how one shops around for any other consumer product, the customer as an individual, not the church as an historic social and cultural (or even sacramental) entity, becomes central. As many commentators on “post-modernity” have observed, when the “meta-narrative,” the really big cosmic story that was once provided by religion, no longer resonates with people’s experiences, all that is left are the smaller narratives constructed by individuals and families and other sub-communities. Just as increasing numbers of people both reside and go bowling alone, they also construct their own private spirituality quite apart from institutional commitments, like Robert Bellah’s famous “Sheila” whom I have mentioned several times. In the midst of this kind of dis-integration of culture and society, it is largely up to each individual to construct his or her own meaning and identity because there is no community around to do it for us, or even to offer much help. So we become a

society of religious “tinkerers,” each of us fabricating our own personal version of a spirituality that “works for me.”

I think it is clear from how I have chosen to formulate these memoirs that I am quite sure that a lot has been lost in the transition away from the old world toward something new. Of course a lot has been gained, too, especially in creature comforts, personal freedoms and cultural richness, but I am by no means alone in feeling concerned about much of what I have seen happening around me during the decades through which I have lived. I have already indicated that many social scientists (and others, too) have used terms like alienation, de-humanization, and *anomie* (meaninglessness) to describe our current condition. I want to add one final dark quotation from a paper that Robert Bellah presented during a conference at UCLA more than fifty years ago, in 1969. The paper appears in a chapter entitled “Between Religion and Social Science” in Bellah’s book, *Beyond Belief: Essays on Religion in a Post-Traditional World*. It is about as dire an assessment of our current social situation as I am aware of.

So-called postreligious man, the cool, self-confident secular man that even some theologians have recently celebrated, is trapped in a literal and circumscribed reality that is classically described in religious terms as the world of death and sin, the fallen world, the world of illusion. Postreligious man is trapped in hell. The world of everyday reality is a socially and personally constructed world. If one confuses that world with reality itself, one then becomes trapped in one’s own delusions, one projects one’s wishes and fears onto others and one acts out of one’s own madness all the while believing one is a clearheaded realist. Christianity, Buddhism, and other religions have long known about such delusions. They are a kind of demonic possession, for the man who believes he is most in control of his world is just the one most in the power of demons... When ordinary reality turns into a nightmare, as it increasingly has in modern society, only some transcendental perspective offers any hope... The adequacy of any perspective is its ability to transform human experience so that it yields life instead of death. Our present fragmented and disorganized culture does not rank high on that criterion. (244-245)

In the midst of this rant against the dark sides of life in the new world, Bellah mentions “hope,” and I would like to end these reflections on that note. So now begins the most overtly sermonic part of these memoirs.

I am not really sure what Bellah had in mind when he used the word hope, but he was a good Episcopalian, so I am quite sure that he understood that Christian hope involves more than just a personal experience of forgiveness of sin and anticipation of eternal life in heaven after death. I am

sure that he understood that hope involves more than pious good feelings of having “peace with God,” or even a mystical sense of oneness with the divine. I am sure that he did not only mean the development of stronger personal ethics. I am also sure that Bellah did not mean the premillennial, dispensationalist confidence that the realization of God’s Kingdom on earth must await the second coming of Jesus—which might happen at any moment now. Hope needs to be more than just a personal emotion, or attitude, or way of thinking, or expectation about life after death, or anticipation of the second coming of Christ. It needs to involve more than just the cultivation of personal character. Hope must be about more than just “me.” If one of our fundamental problems involves an unraveling of a cohesive social order, then hope must include the prospect of weaving things back together again in some way, shape, or form. And that reconstructed social order will not look like the Amish in Pennsylvania, the Mennonite colonies in Russia, nor the old ethno-religious Mennonite-ism that we knew in small farm towns like Corn, Oklahoma, Hillsboro, Kansas, or Reedley, California, because they are all part of “the world we have lost,” and few of us have any inclination toward going back.

But perhaps the image of the very earliest Christian church community offers a glimpse into what reconstituted social relationships in a hopeful Christian “transcendental perspective” might look like. Luke, the Greek author of the two “books” in the New Testament that are called *Luke* and *Acts* but were originally one manuscript, provides not just one but two succinct descriptions of what the motley group that was the first community of Christians did together. The fact that Luke chose to repeat essentially similar descriptions twice in his very compactly structured account of the origins of the Christian movement says, to me at least, that he thought this was really important. The second summary in Acts 4:32-35 is more abbreviated, so I will cite the part of the longer account that appears earlier in Acts:

They met constantly to hear the apostles teach, and to share the common life, to break bread, and to pray. A sense of awe was everywhere, and many marvels and signs were brought about through the apostles. All whose faith had drawn them together held everything in common: they would sell their property and possessions and make a general distribution as the need of each required. With one mind they kept up their daily attendance at the temple, and, breaking bread in private houses, shared their meals with unaffected joy, as they praised God and enjoyed the favor of the whole people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those whom he was saving. (2:42-47, NEB)

One way to read this text, it seems to me, is as a brief idealized portrait of what an early Christian version of the old Jewish vision of “shalom” might look like. Shalom is the Jewish term for the ideal condition that God has always desired for people to live in. Shalom was the goal toward which both

the Jewish Torah (laws) and the prophets pointed. It was a vision of community relationships that were built on a foundation of love for God, for our neighbors, including the foreigners and strangers in our midst, and for the natural world around us. It was a vision of community in which relationships between people would be characterized by “peace,” a word that is often used to translate shalom. But shalom peace would mean a lot more than just the absence of war or conflict. Peace would mean the practice of justice and righteousness in relationships between people, in relationships with the Creator God, and with the created order. Shalom would mean health and harmony. It would mean that each of the “organs” in the communal “organism” functioned as it should, and that all of the institutional components, the “organs” of society, would fit together in a healthy equilibrium. What we have in this brief text, it seems to me, is a very succinct portrait of how this vision of shalom was realized, for a few short moments at least, in the earliest experiences of Christian community. This is a utopian vision of what a Christian version of shalom might look like.

I will not repeat my favorite sermon on these passages (my own, preached in Japanese in the Komaki Hope Chapel), but I would like to point out just a few things. First, this sounds to me like a highly centered community of people whose shared activities touched every dimension of their lives. Their faith commitment drew them together for study (*didache*); for worship (*liturgia*); for eating, fellowshiping and sharing economic resources together in community both as a larger group in the Jewish temple, a very public place, but also in smaller gatherings in their private homes, like a new type of family (*koinonia*). It is clear from the context of this account and through the rest of the New Testament and the entire history of the Christian church, that serving the needs, both material and spiritual, of people both within and outside the Christian community (*diakonia*) is another one of the important functions of the church. It is my impression from the text that being “of one mind” and the “joy” that the community experienced together were also products of the activities in which they engaged together. And, of course, proclaiming the “gospel” (*kerygma*) in both word and deed is an important part of what church communities have always done together, though in this description of the early church, the fact that new people were joining the community is almost like an afterthought, as if that is a natural by-product of what people were doing together in the community. In words attributed to St. Francis and still cited by Mennonites and many others: “Preach the Gospel at all times. When necessary, use words.”

I bothered to insert the Greek terms for these varied functions that happened in the life of the earliest Christian community to indicate that these ideas are very old. Church leaders have known from the

beginning and through the entire history of the church that portraits of a healthy church community are never one-dimensional. A church that has shrunk its repertoire of shared activities to just an hour or so, two or three times a month, with the public worship experience privileged above everything else, cannot be a healthy church community. Neither can a church experience that is limited to just small groups gathered to study, pray, or fellowship realize the full calling of what a Christian community is meant to be. I think author Luke's point is that it takes studying, fellowshiping, worshipping, serving, and sharing together in every dimension of social life to achieve the levels of joy, unity of spirit, and organic growth that are portrayed in this early picture of the Christian church.

Economic sharing was obviously one part of what Christian community meant in those early days. Only a few Christian groups (e.g. the Hutterites) have thought that the primitive communism practiced by the early church was normative for all Christians in all times and places, but it is clear that their faith powerfully shaped the economic behavior of the early Christian community. In this they were carrying forward concerns for economic justice that were very ancient, beginning with the early hunting and gathering bands that were communal in their social and economic organization. In the biblical tradition, early Jewish laws forbade the charging of interest on loans, and there was the ideal of the "Year of Jubilee" which involved cancelling debts and redistributing land every fifty years so that no members of the community would become too wealthy and powerful and the poor would have few or no chances to escape from poverty. It is clear that from the beginning of the Old Testament all the way through church history to the recent statements of Catholic (such as Pope Francis) and Protestant leaders alike, finding ways to assist the poor is at the heart of what it means to be "God's People," and the earliest church certainly found one way to accomplish this, within their own community at least. Many Protestant congregations continue a tradition of periodically collecting funds to assist people in need, but these are mostly token gestures that come out of our abundance, *after* we have satisfied our own ever-growing appetites for the consumption of consumer goods. The only reason many of us might be able to say that "they had never a needy person among them" (Acts 4:34) is not because we have found a way to eliminate poverty but because most of our congregations (like our cities) are so segregated along lines of class and race that many of us middle class white people rarely have personal contact with or even *see* the really poor folks in the communities around us. So in a healthy community, economics is not simply one compartment of life that is isolated from other compartments, operating autonomously according to its own invisible "laws," but our economic behavior should be woven into a tapestry that includes love and justice in all of our social relationships.

Biblical author Luke's brief snapshots of the earliest Christian communities represent an idealized image, a "utopian" vision of church life that in practice was short-lived at best. It is clear from the rest of the Luke-Acts account that dealing with both internal and external conflicts was very much part of the larger story. Jesus' conflicts with the various Jewish and Roman powers—that ended in his death by crucifixion, and conflicts with both the Roman political and Jewish religious authorities provided the context for much of the early history of the church. Not only that, but already in the sixth chapter of the *Acts* section of his text, author Luke describes an internal conflict within the church community that involved gender, ethnicity, and class (money) that was so severe that it required new organizational structures to resolve. In fact, much of the literature in the New Testament can be read as Paul's (and others') suggestions on how to deal with conflicts within the church. But even though there has always been a considerable gap between the ideal and the real, that does not mean that it is not useful to have a hopeful image of what a healthy human community might look like so we can have some criteria to use in making judgments about how to best arrange our personal and collective lives together.

It is clear from what happened in the early history of the Christian community that our social and religious relationships do not always have to simply mirror conditions in the surrounding society, and that is the note of hope on which I wish to (at last) end these many recollections and reflections. If it was possible to construct an alternative, healthier human community in the midst of a brutally oppressive system like the so-called *pax romana*, or "peace of Rome," under which many people suffered during the first century C.E., it is also possible for us to create an alternative to the individualistic, materialistic, polarized and violent society in which we find ourselves today. The early Christians found a creative way to reconstruct the really important relationships in life, across the boundaries of age, gender, class, culture, and religion, to create a new kind of community of *agape* love. And breakthroughs like this did not happen only once, but they happened repeatedly in various times and places throughout the history of the church—and they happened beyond the walls of the church, too.

"Hope," it seems to me, means that we can have confidence that if the reconstruction of community relationships happened in other times and places, it can and will happen again. But my guess is that conditions will have to get a lot worse before many of us are sufficiently motivated to try to get back to something new that is also very old, and is quite different from how most of us now live. For most of us in the American middle class, this new world still feels too comfortable and convenient to try to construct something dramatically different from the status quo. Most of us are on the "white" side of

the color line, religious persecution is no longer much of an issue, and, in fact, many people think being Mennonite is pretty cool. Plus, American capitalism has been quite good to most of us members of the comfortable middle class. And most of us have found ways to successfully negotiate our way through social worlds that are highly bureaucratized. There are not yet compelling reasons for us to make radical changes. Meanwhile, I suppose about the best we can do is try to imagine what a better “good society” might be like in the post-modern world in which we live, and then contribute as we are able to groups and communities that resemble, in some ways at least, what we think the “Kingdom of God” might look like here “on earth as it is in heaven.”

SOME REFERENCES FOR FURTHER READING

For anyone who is interested, information about most of the authors and works to which I refer in this manuscript are readily available online, as are endless resources on society and culture. For an introductory overview of the history of all of the major branches of the Mennonite family of churches, C. J. Dyck, editor, *An Introduction to Mennonite History* (Scottsdale Pa.: Herald Press, 1967) is an older but still often cited text. Also an older but still useful overview of the history of the Mennonite Brethren is J. A Toews, *A History of the Mennonite Brethren Church: Pilgrims and Pioneers* (Hillsboro, Kansas: Board of Christian Literature, 1975). A more recent survey of the history of the Mennonite Brethren is Paul Toews and Kevin Enns- Rempel, editors, *For Everything a Season: Mennonite Brethren in North America, 1874 – 2002* (Winnipeg, Manitoba: Kindred Press, 2002). *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* is probably the most important of the many journals that deal with things Mennonite. The *Direction* journal publishes scholarly articles that mostly deal with issues important to the Mennonite Brethren. Contact the archives in the libraries of the several Mennonite colleges for further recommendations of materials related to the Mennonites.



"It is the big differences between the old world of my childhood and youth and how most of us are living now that inspired me to write these recollections and reflections. I want to leave my own personal account of what life was like in one version of an older world and how the society and culture around me have changed as they have during my lifetime—and I want to suggest some reasons why things have changed as they have."

Robert Enns